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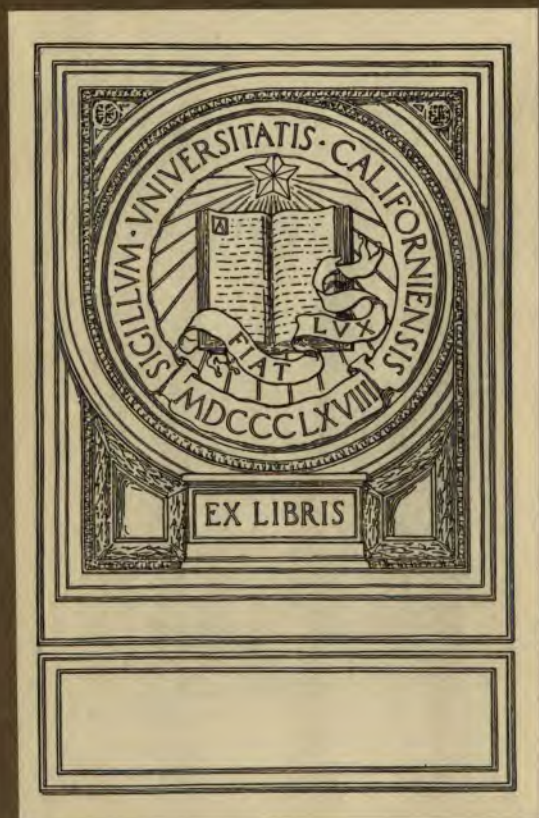
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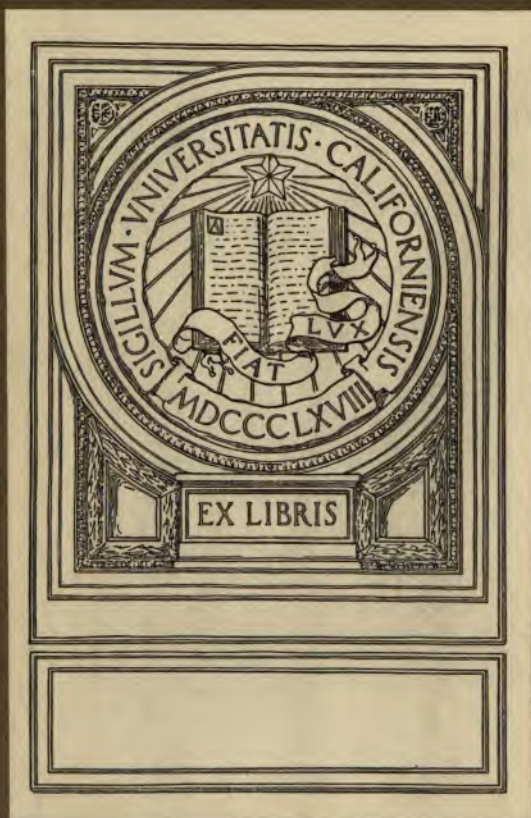
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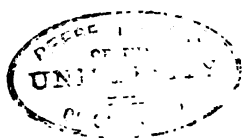








## ETHICAL SYSTEMS



# ETHICS:

AN INVESTIGATION  
OF THE  
FACTS AND LAWS OF THE MORAL LIFE

BY  
WILHELM WUNDT  
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG

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VOL. II.  
*ETHICAL SYSTEMS*



LONDON  
SWAN SONNENSCHN & CO., LIM.  
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO.

1897

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**WUNDT'S ETHICS.**



**VOL. I. INTRODUCTION: THE FACTS OF THE MORAL LIFE.**

**VOL. II. ETHICAL SYSTEMS.**

**VOL. III. THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY, AND THE SPHERE OF  
THEIR VALIDITY.**



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THIS volume is a translation of the second book of Professor Wundt's *Ethik*, comprising pages 270-432 of the second German edition. It forms a concise history of Ethics, which (apart from its intrinsic interest as a feature of Wundt's ethical system) will serve to supplement Professor Sidgwick's *Outlines* by reason of its more extended treatment of Continental schools. The terminology of the first volume has been followed, and English references are substituted for the German wherever possible. Especial thanks are due to Professor E. B. Titchener, of Cornell University, for many helpful suggestions, and for a revision of the proof.

MARGARET FLOY WASHBURN.





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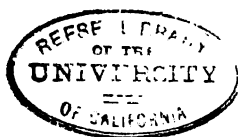
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**VOL. II.**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL THEORIES  
OF THE UNIVERSE.**





## CHAPTER I.

### ANCIENT ETHICS.

#### I. THE BEGINNINGS OF ANCIENT ETHICS.

##### (a) *Pre-Socratic Ethics.*

THE earliest Greek speculation was for the most part *cosmological*. Hence it took little interest in ethical questions. The sayings ascribed to the mythical or semi-mythical Seven Sages are crystallisations of popular morality, which cannot be treated as the beginnings of a science. The earliest philosophical schools, however, joined to their philosophical endeavours efforts, primarily reformatory, against the popular religion. The *Eleatics*, especially, in that opposition to polytheism and the humanising of the nature-gods, which was begun by their founder Xenophanes, cleared the way at least for later ethical speculations. The same thing is true of the religio-philosophical sect of the *Pythagoreans*, although, in spite of the great stress they laid upon certain external requirements of conduct, they can scarcely be said to have reached the stage of reflection on the subject of morals.<sup>1</sup> Nor do we find in *Heraclitus* and *Democritus* the Atomist anything but isolated ethical maxims.<sup>2</sup> Never-

<sup>1</sup> ZIEGLER, *Die Ethik der Griechen und Römer*, i. pp. 27 ff., is, however, of a different opinion on this point. But the arguments which he adduces seem to me to prove only that ethical influences were present in the cosmological speculations of the Pythagoreans.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. on these M. HEINZE, *Der Eudämonismus in der griechischen Philosophie*. *Abh. d. sächs. Ges. d. Wiss., phil. hist. Cl.*, viii. pp. 694 ff.



theless, in the facts that Heraclitus regarded trust in the divine world-order as the source of all human satisfaction, while Democritus, on the other hand, declared cheerfulness and tranquility of temperament to be true happiness, we can see the first flashes of the storm between opposite tendencies which were later to come into conflict.

It is, then, characteristic of the development of ethics that it did not, like other sciences, especially natural philosophy, begin with positive dogmas; but that the first steps it made consisted in *denial*, in the destruction of existing conceptions of morality. Preceding philosophers had shaken faith in the popular religion: the *Sophists* began to call into question the moral ideas associated therewith. The Sophists, as we know, gave perhaps less umbrage to their own time by what they taught, than by the way they taught it. They were the first to treat learning as a mercenary career,—an attitude which was an offence against current morality. But the fact that they occupied this attitude, to which we moderns make no objection, is significant also as regards the *contents* of their teaching. They acknowledged no universally valid norm of human conduct, but assumed that its motives were wholly *subjective* and hence changing, just as human knowledge was subjective and variable. In spite of this sceptical position, the Sophists show a congruity between their theoretical and practical teachings hardly attained by the earlier philosophers. If there is no universally valid knowledge, then there are no universally valid moral principles. Man, the individual man with his personal opinions and wishes, is in the one case as in the other the measure of things. Really, however, the lack of a moral principle in this system of ethics is only apparent. Though all universally valid principles are abolished, there remains *egoism*, which the Sophists exhibited in their own mode of life, inasmuch as they applied their knowledge and rhetorical skill to the furtherance of their own interests,

evading as far as possible the demands which society and the state make upon the individual. They taught subjectivism, not only because they believed it, but because it was useful to them. It was probably this fact rather than their opposition to the old worn-out cosmological speculations, which rendered their doctrine questionable and hurtful to public morals.

(b) *Socrates and the Socratic Schools.*

Thus we see that even the man whom Aristotle called the founder of scientific ethics, even *Socrates*, stands so far as his relation to preceding philosophical thought is concerned, throughout upon common ground with the Sophists. For him also man, the individual, is the only object deserving a deeper interest. What distinguishes him from his predecessors and contemporaries is his estimation of the *motive* of human action, in that he regards all those springs of action which are directed towards the satisfaction of a transitory pleasure or a transitory need as worthless, or at least as subordinate; while he maintains that only those of such a nature as to call forth a lasting yet *intense* feeling of pleasure are the motives really worthy of man. Duration and intensity, though formal criteria only, are traits easily recognisable in the investigation of the *internal* properties of the Good. Yet we are forced to conclude from the accounts of his teaching in Xenophon and Plato that Socrates did not succeed in reaching a concept of virtue accurately defined as to its contents. This failure is easy to understand, not only because intensity and duration are merely *relative* marks, but because the whole kind and manner of the Socratic investigation bore an inductive character, in accordance with which it sought rather to exhibit the good in special instances, than to include it in a definite general concept. Hence the fact that in these discussions not only do the good, the useful and the

pleasurable seem to coincide, but certain relatively lower kinds of usefulness are assigned an ethical value.<sup>1</sup> Socrates' whole view of life, however, would be wrongly judged, if one were to construe it in accordance with such single expressions. It was true of him, if of anyone, that the man was greater than his doctrine; and the latter approaches more closely to the likeness of the man if we take it in its entirety. In the requirement of *duration* we have an important advance beyond the Sophistic scepticism, which had especially emphasised the subjective and variable character of morals. If in the choice of motives the preference is no longer granted to that motive which seems natural or pleasant at the moment, but to that only which assures a lasting satisfaction, then the choice is made *ipso facto* in behalf of rational deliberation. It is only rational deliberation that can distinguish between transitory and permanent goods. Thus from this postulate there follows immediately the Socratic law that *virtue is knowledge*: a law which carries with it the warning to decide according to motives of permanent, not of transitory value. But that which is permanently valuable, as it is fixed for the individual consciousness, cannot be variable from subject to subject, either: it must possess an *universal* value. In this sense there follows from the law that virtue is knowledge the second law that *virtue may be taught*. Only a knowledge which has its firm basis in general principles of human nature can be communicated by one person to another. For this reason the Sophist Gorgias was consistent with his own standpoint, when he assumed that even if knowledge existed it could not be communicated: an assumption which is the extreme opposite of the Socratic law that virtue may be taught.

But a further conclusion is furnished us by the thought of

<sup>1</sup> Many of the expressions in XENOPHON'S *Mem.* are especially important in this connection.

the universal character of the concept of virtue. If what is good and useful to one is so to others, then it cannot and ought not to happen that the interests of different individuals should come into irreconcilable conflict. Where such a conflict is threatened, a solution must be found in a rational balancing of all the real interests involved. It must be confessed that this inference from Socrates is scarcely expressed in his teachings. His attention was so much directed towards the conduct of the individual life that he did not give their proper rights to claims which transcended that life. On the occasions when, as Xenophon tells us, he declared that man to be most praiseworthy who anticipated his enemies in maleficence and his friends in beneficence,<sup>1</sup> his standpoint, that of individual utility, seems to have varied but little from the current popular morality. Of course, however, we must not forget that such isolated expressions are influenced by the circumstances in which they were uttered, and that for this reason they cannot always claim unconditional validity. What is more significant for the character and tendency of the Socratic doctrine is his reference to the *two* sources of moral requirements, the written law of the State and the unwritten law of the gods.<sup>2</sup> Here he is the philosophic interpreter of a separation which had taken place in the moral consciousness of his time; the separation between the *inner moral requirement* and the *external legal order*. In obedience to both of these Socrates saw the mark of the upright man. This principle of obedience, however, lifts him above the standpoint of egoistic utility, which is apparent in so many single utterances; and here is the very point where his own *example* transcends the contents of his doctrine, or at least makes the latter seem like merely an imperfect expression of his moral disposition. Socrates found his chosen life-work in teaching his fellow-citizens.

<sup>1</sup> XEN. *Mem.* ii. 3, 14.

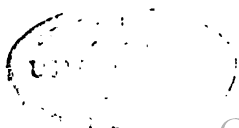
<sup>2</sup> XEN. *Mem.* ix. 4, 12-25.

To help others according to their capacity, to attain that power of ethical introspection which had become a necessity to him,—this was what he recognised as his highest moral duty, which he could not forsake without depriving his life of its meaning. None the less, however, was he penetrated with the conviction, which he repeatedly expressed to his pupils, that obedience to the laws of the State is the duty of everyone. The conflict between the general duty of civic obedience and that individual duty of fidelity to the inner call, which he felt as a religious and moral requirement, he knew no other way of meeting than by voluntary submission to the death sentence of his judges, though it would have been easy for him to avoid death by flight from prison or by forsaking his mode of teaching. It has been justly said in this connection that Socrates suffered death because life without that chosen calling seemed to him no longer worth living, and that thus his death was only an affirmation of the very eudæmonism which he proclaimed in his doctrine. As a matter of fact, we cannot speak in his case of a categorical imperative of duty, whose merit, as with Kant, consists in the fulfilment of duty *without inclination*. We have to do here with a need of happiness, which coincides with duty, because only the fulfilment of duty brings happiness and is worth striving for. The Socratic ethics was too much the outcome of its founder's life to regard the life according to duty and the happy life (*δικαίως ζῆν* and *εὖ ζῆν*) as in general distinct. But the realisation of such an unity in one's own life is one thing; the doctrinal expression of it another. While we not infrequently find the former falling below the latter, the greatness of Socrates consists in the fact that his doctrine is only an imperfect approximation to the moral fact of his life. If this fact were taken away, what would the Socratic ethics be to us to-day? Assume that he had escaped from prison as his disciples

wished, we might perhaps regard his sayings as an attempt, well-meant but imperfectly executed, at a positive reform against the destructive efforts of the Sophists, but the man himself would no longer be for us the creator of ethics. That he is this is due not to his doctrine, but to his life; above all, to the influence which his life had upon that greatest philosophical moralist of the Greeks, who called himself his disciple,—upon *Plato*.

How readily the single utterances of Socrates lent themselves to different interpretations is most strikingly shown by the *Socratic Schools*, which all, in spite of their decided contrast to each other, honoured Socrates as their master, and to whose adherents, therefore, we must allow at least the personal conviction that they were his true followers and the heirs of his doctrine. Only *two* of these schools are important for ethics: that of the *Cynics*, founded by Antisthenes; and that of the *Cyrenaics*, founded by Aristippus. While the Cynics pushed to extremes the Socratic indifference to external sources of happiness, the eudæmonistic side of the Socratic thought was seized upon with equal partiality by the Cyrenaics, and developed into a doctrine of external pleasure. The opposition which we find between the two schools at this point is of great significance, because it takes its origin in the nature of the ethical problems themselves, and hence is constantly recurring under the most diverse forms. More particularly, the Cynics and Cyrenaics are in this respect the immediate forerunners of the Stoics and Epicureans of a later period.

In contrast to these one-sided Socratics, who appealed to isolated sayings and acts, it was *Plato* who, entering into the spirit of the Socratic thought, brought to consciousness the unspoken word of the Master and expressed the Master's life in his own works.





## 2. PLATO AND ARISTOTLE.

(a) *Platonic Ethics.*

✓ Plato's philosophy rests wholly and entirely on an ethical basis. Moreover, his theoretical view of the world is determined by ethical ideas and requirements. Taking his stand on the Socratic law that virtue is knowledge, he makes it his task to give the ethical concept of the *Good* the central position in an all-embracing theory of the universe. Here, in the first instance, the question arises as to how the Good itself is to be defined; a question which Socrates had not answered, since he was only concerned with pointing out the Good in single instances. The earliest Platonic dialogues are occupied with this question, and the answers given to it vary within the limits of the national ways of looking at things. Bravery, justice, piety, and above all regulative prudence, which Plato emphasises as the most important virtues, were held to be such by the Greeks generally. In his conception of the motive for these virtues, also, he hardly differs at first from his prototype, inasmuch as he seeks to show that virtuous action is, in special cases, useful and productive of happiness.<sup>1</sup> He betrays his universalism at the outset only in the fact that he does not recognise an internal diversity among the separate virtues, but assumes an unity of the virtues corresponding to the unity of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> No one of them can exist without the others, for they are all subordinate to wisdom and may be regarded as its special parts or applications.

Within the range of thought just indicated fall the dialogues of the first, the Socratic period of the Platonic philosophy. But in the last of these, especially in the *Crito* and the *Gorgias*, there is already discoverable

<sup>1</sup> *Protag.*, 354-359.<sup>2</sup> *Protag.*, 329 ff.

the germ from which the *doctrine of Ideas* is developed; and the ethical motives of this remarkable theory, which forms the centre of Plato's whole later system, are here clearly apparent. When Plato, perhaps influenced more by the Socratic life than by the Socratic doctrine, rises to the principle that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, he can no longer avoid the conviction that the Good and the pleasurable do not necessarily coincide. It would, however, be intolerable to suppose a permanent conflict between pleasure and good. There is thus no way out of the difficulty save by the opposition of permanent to transitory pleasure; and, since the former is unattainable in the life of sense, it must be sought in a supersensuous existence.<sup>1</sup> This fundamental ethical thought is combined with the Socratic assumption that virtue and knowledge are one and the same. The Good also, the object of all virtues, is, in its real essence, but one: it is a world-governing power, active in the forms of nature as well as in the thoughts and deeds of men. Thus the Good becomes for Plato the contents of his conception of God. But the attempt to form a scheme of the world on this hypothesis is baffled by the facts of imperfection and wickedness. The sense-world, then, must be only an imperfect copy of an ideal supersensuous world; and the distinction between concept and sense-presentation seems to confirm this assumption. We have in our concepts the reminiscences of a supersensuous world, a world set free from matter: sense-impressions are only the external occasions for the awakening of such recollections. To every object of thought there corresponds an Idea; the Good, however, is the highest Idea, to which all the others are subordinated. In the world of Ideas perfect harmony rules; there every Idea is in accordance with the Idea of the Good. In the world of sense, on the other hand, the

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* i. 329; v. 476 ff. and espec. ix. and x.

purity of the Ideas is affected by their union with matter ; here, therefore, the individual Ideas may conflict with each other as well as with the Idea of the Good. Thus wickedness and imperfection arise. In a future supersensuous existence they will be overcome ; just as in an existence previous to this union with matter they did not exist.

Apparently, the ethical thought upon which this whole system is based is identical with that which lies at the bottom of the religious idea of retribution. A similar likeness may be traced in the inclination to which Plato often yielded, to shroud his philosophical thoughts in mythical form. Among these mythological illustrations there occur phases of the retributive conception which could find no place in the philosophic formulation of the doctrine of Ideas : for instance, the notion of punishment for sin, and a process of purification for the guilty.<sup>1</sup> Still more remarkable is another thought, likewise clothed in mythical garb, but truly philosophical at its core, which bears upon the question of the *development* of moral ideas in the empirical consciousness. The general principle that this consciousness beholds the Ideas under the form of sensuous presentations involves an intrinsic relation between these presentations and the Ideas, especially the chief of them, the Idea of the Good. At the same time, however, the Idea of the Good must not be presented to consciousness in its undisguised aspect, but in a sensuous form, out of which dialectic thought may create a concept adequate to the Idea. Now this sensuous form of the Good is, according to Plato, the *Beautiful*. He thus gives a deeper philosophic meaning to the old Hellenic thought of an inner unity of the <sup>ΒΕΛΟΥΤΕΛ</sup>καλόν and the <sup>ΑΓΑΘΟΝ</sup>ἀγαθόν. In the *Phædrus* he connects this thought with the mythological figure of Eros, the god of Love, who takes possession of the lover as a divine

<sup>1</sup> *Phædrus*, 248 ff. *Phædo*, 109-115. *Rep.* x. 614 ff.

frenzy, and kindles at the sight of beauty a love which is the longing of the soul after the imperishable prototype of the beautiful. Of all the Ideas, that of beauty is the most radiant, and hence even in its earthly copies is known through the clearest of our senses, the illuminating eye. Thus, at the sight of beauty there is aroused a reminiscence of the ideal world. But behind this reminiscence, which is called forth by the aspect of the beautiful object, there lies a process of development, allied to the development of knowledge from the sensuous perception to the concept. The lowest stage is the love of particular beautiful bodies; the second, love of the beautiful in all its manifold forms,—a love which still adheres to the sensuous appearance, but seeks therein that which is universal. The third stage is love for beauty of the soul, for moral beauty. This, too, is at first fixed upon the individual, the single moral personality; but in the fourth and highest stage it rises to the contemplation of that universal Being which is the contents of knowledge, and as such the most perfect copy of the world of Ideas. Yet, even sensuous love bears in itself the germ of this final form. For the love of one friend for another, first kindled merely by physical beauty, gradually rises to spiritual love, and since this is occupied in a common striving for knowledge, it finally becomes the source of love for the Idea of the Good and Beautiful itself, which thus appears as the true object, though but obscurely recognised at first, of the lower forms of love.<sup>1</sup>

This whole discussion, which we have here clothed as far as possible in its mythical form, is the first attempt to find an inner relation between the ethical and the *æsthetic*. For Plato's own ethics this combination had important consequences. Through its means the system was preserved from

<sup>1</sup> *Phædrus*, 237-257.

a danger which threatened it by reason of its antithesis between the perfection of the world of Ideas and the imperfection of sensuous existence, burdened with matter. This danger lay in the tendency to asceticism and avoidance of the world which seems to be the almost inevitable consequence of such a view. That even Plato did not quite escape it is strikingly shown in the *Phædo*, the dialogue which bears the powerful impress of Socrates' dying hour. Here it is said that the soul, since it will some day return to its supersensuous home, ought to approximate as far as possible to a separation from the body even while on earth, by abjuring sense-pleasure and withdrawing into itself.<sup>1</sup> The fact that this tendency failed to obtain permanent sway is perhaps due chiefly to a lively feeling for the ethical power of the beautiful, and to the conviction that the Idea of the Beautiful cannot do without the sensuous form for its realisation. Plato's moral conception of life in his riper years, as it is represented especially in his greatest ethical work, the *Republic*, has felt the tempering influence of this conviction.

It is true that even here the fundamental thought of the doctrine of Ideas is still predominant,—the thought that the world of sense has its permanent background in a supersensuous, purely spiritual existence, of which the soul bears in itself an obscure reminiscence, and towards which it strives to return as to its home. But the sense-world is at the same time a *copy* of the ideal world, and it is so more and more as moral action guided by wisdom succeeds in actualising the Idea of the Good—the supreme Idea. In so far as man accomplishes such a realisation, thus far his activity approaches that of the Creator, who, Himself one with the Idea of the Good, has produced nature in its various forms by allowing the Ideas to have part in it: a thought which Plato

<sup>1</sup> *Phædo*, 79-84, 107.

expresses in mythical form in his work on natural philosophy, the *Timæus*. But just as here the supreme Idea of the Good cannot realise itself in a single natural form, but only in the coherence of the world as a whole, so we find that man in the more limited sphere of his moral action is capable of producing the Good not as an individual, but only as a totality, in the *State*. In proportion as a given State can attain this end, it possesses moral value. From this point of view Plato describes in his *Republic* an *ideal of the State*, setting forth such civic regulations as in his opinion are most perfectly suited to the end in question. And here the creation of the world, especially the creation of man, furnishes him with a prototype for the creation of the State, to be brought about through man. Just as the human soul is divided into *three* parts—knowing, feeling, and desiring—of which the first ought to have authority over the other two, so the State is to be divided into *three classes* corresponding to the parts of the soul; the class of the rulers, to which as endowed with the rational principle there is assigned the exercise of justice, the guardianship of the State laws, and the education of youth; the class of the warriors, whose office is to ensure the safety of the State from external attacks; and lastly the class of the farmers and craftsmen, upon whom fall the lower occupations, indispensable indeed for the necessities of life, but ethically valueless in the opinion of the aristocratic philosopher. To these three ranks there correspond *three principal virtues*, each the function also of one of the three parts of the soul: *wisdom*, the virtue of reason; *valour*, the virtue of the spirited part of the soul, the *θυμός*; *moderation*, the virtue of the appetitive part of the soul, the *ἐπιθυμία*. These virtues, however, are not to be thought of as absolutely separate, any more than the corresponding parts of the soul. It would, indeed, be impossible to require the higher virtues of the



lower ranks ; but each of the lower virtues must be demanded of the rulers. Thus from the union of these three virtues in their just proportions there arises the fourth, *justice*. This is the virtue upon whose exercise the preservation of national order is wholly dependent ; for through it the separate parts of the State, each in its own sphere and in accordance with its peculiar virtue, combine into a harmonious whole.<sup>1</sup>

The most noteworthy feature of this system of ethics is its subordination of the *individual* moral end to the *universal, political* end. True, Plato does treat the State as the means which, especially in education, enables the individual to attain virtue ; yet the State itself transcends in importance this purely individual function, since perfect harmony of the virtues can be reached in it alone, and never by the individual. This strong drift of his ethics in the direction of politics necessarily conflicts to a certain extent with his earlier expositions, in which the Socratic individualism prevails. In fact, we find the philosopher abandoning the doctrine of the *unity* of the virtues, of which he had previously made so much. Since the individual is little more than a tributary part of the whole, he need cultivate only a *single* virtue, that one which corresponds to his station in life. The thought of unity here appears only in the requirement that the leaders of the State, the philosophers, shall combine in themselves all the virtues. Instead of the identity of the virtues previously assumed, we have the *government* of the lower virtues by the highest, wisdom ; and the resulting combination of all into the single harmonising virtue, justice.

While such a division and separation of the virtues betrays an effort to do justice to the complexity of the phenomena of moral life, in his latest writings Plato has given us the *practical* sequel to this effort. In so doing he has, it is true, departed

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* iv.-vi.

from the ideal standpoint maintained in the *Republic*; but by that very fact he has come nearer to the requirements of life and reality. Thus in the *Laws* he opposes to the four divine virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation and justice the four human virtues of health, beauty, physical strength and riches. Together with this higher estimate of external goods, the philosopher puts the cardinal virtues more on an equality with each other than he did in the *Republic*, and brings the significance of the practical virtues more into the foreground. Wisdom formerly appeared as the root of moral action; now it is moderation that is chiefly prized. This change had a profound influence upon his political views. The necessity of class divisions, the rulership of the philosophers, are less emphasised. At the same time we find other and purely humanistic requirements, such as the purity of marriage and the kind treatment of slaves, more strongly insisted upon. Here Plato's views already approach in many particulars those of his great successor *Aristotle*, who, in complete opposition to the idealistic and transcendental system set forth in the *Republic*, endeavours to establish his ethics throughout on the basis of actual life.

(b) *The Aristotelian Ethics.*

It is customary to find the chief contrast between Plato and his greatest pupil in their metaphysical standpoints, and the polemic which Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* directs against the doctrine of Ideas seems to confirm this opinion. But on closer examination one can hardly avoid the conviction that their real opposition is on *ethical* grounds, while in their fundamental metaphysical views, taken as a whole, the agreement is greater than the contradiction. What Aristotle combats in the doctrine of Ideas is precisely that side of it on which its ethical import rests—namely, that independence of the Ideas which is for Plato the pledge of a supersensuous existence

to which all his ethical views are fundamentally related. It is not the Ideas—not conceptual existence in itself—that Aristotle denies; he denies the possibility of separating them from matter, except in the cases of the Deity and the rational soul. But if the conceptual, the spiritual, exists in general only in sensuous form, then moral action can have reference only to sensuous existence. In this way the Aristotelian ethics takes on a *realistic* character. Not “What is the good in and for itself, or in a supermundane world?” but “What is the good for man within the conditions of his empirical existence?”—that is the question to which all the ethical discussions of the philosopher relate.

He is, it is true, at one with Plato in holding that the individual cannot attain the highest good by himself, but only in the political community. Hence politics is for him the final stage of ethics, and man he defines as a *political being*. But it is not only because it accomplishes higher ends that political life seems to him superior to individual life; but also and chiefly because the ends of the individual can be fully gained only with the co-operation of the State.<sup>1</sup> In the one case as in the other the ends consist in the attainment of *happiness*. There can be no dispute, Aristotle thinks, about the statement that happiness is the contents of the Good; different opinions are possible only on the question as to what constitutes happiness and how it is to be obtained. Aristotle's discussion of these different views is conducted in a purely practical spirit, each one receiving the consideration which it merits. It seems self-evident to the philosopher that sense-pleasure, riches, and honour should be recognised to a certain extent as goods. They cannot, however, claim the position of the highest good, for the highest good can proceed—and here Aristotle is in accord with Plato—only from the functioning of the highest faculty of the soul, *reason*. Now the right

<sup>1</sup> *Nicom. Eth.* i. 1; *Polit.* i. 1.

activity of reason is *virtue*: consequently true happiness also consists in the activity of reason. We must not forget, in discussing this conception of virtue as the activity of the rational part of the soul, what a wide connotation the Greek word *Arete* had. Virtue is for Aristotle *fitness*, and in this sense he classifies the virtues in accordance with the twofold direction of rational activity. In its *theoretical* function reason is confined within its own limits, not coming into relation with the other psychic faculties; in its *practical* activity it operates to restrain and guide the desires. Theoretical reason, then, functions in thinking; practical reason in willing. Each of these directions of rational activity has its peculiar virtues: those of theoretical reason are the *dianoëtic* virtues, wisdom, insight, prudence; those of practical reason are the *ethical* virtues: here belong courage, self-control, liberality, etc. Thus only the ethical virtues are related to *moral action*, are virtues in our sense of the word; the dianoëtic virtues are rather *capacities*; they may be in large measure conducive to the true virtues, especially to the most important virtue, justice, but this is only the case when they influence the *will*—that is, when the dianoëtic virtue is partly transformed into an ethical virtue. From this standpoint Aristotle expressly combats the Socratic law that virtue is knowledge, and the related statement that no one can knowingly do evil.<sup>1</sup>

This division of the virtues may well be called one of the greatest philosophical discoveries of any age. By its aid the sphere of ethics is, for the first time, accurately defined. Socrates had indicated reason as the organ of moral action; but the recognition of this fact led him to overestimate the ethical significance of knowledge; thought and will became for him indistinguishably blended. Even Plato did not overcome this confusion. Aristotle was the first to recognise the *will* as the specifically ethical function within the general

<sup>1</sup> *Nicom. Eth.* vi. 13; vii. 3.

domain of reason ; and for him, accordingly, moral virtue consists, not in *right knowledge*, but in the *good will*, which is indeed dependent upon reason, but not identical with it. With reference to this activity of the will which is essential for the existence of the moral virtues, Aristotle especially emphasises the influence of *practice*. Although the disposition to these virtues exists in everyone, yet like every other bodily or mental capacity it must be strengthened by practice. The stimulus to this practice may be found in the fact that virtue is the highest good ; that is, it is eminently adapted to produce happiness. Aristotle is too keen an observer of human nature to expect that virtue will be practised without a motive in the form of pleasure. It will be sought only because it ensures the completest pleasure. Of course it takes deliberation and insight to discern the relation between happiness and virtue, and for that very reason man does not act virtuously of himself ; education of the reason and of its influence on the will are necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Though virtue has thus been recognised as the rational guidance of the will, yet the real contents of the concept of virtue is as yet wholly undetermined. This much at any rate is *a priori* clear, that Aristotle has no reason for assuming, after the Platonic fashion, an unity of the virtues, or even a limitation of them to any fixed number of cardinal virtues. We shall have to distinguish as many kinds of virtues as there are kinds of rational volitions. For a general definition of the concept of virtue, then, we cannot consider material characteristics ; we must have recourse to a *formal* criterion in which the different virtues agree. Such a criterion is found in the fact that virtue consists in the *moderation* and *guidance* of the *desires by reason*. Here the consideration suggests itself that all

<sup>1</sup> *Nicom. Eth.* ii. 1-3 ; x. 5, 6.

desires, feelings, and emotions move between *opposites*. It follows that moral errors, which arise from unbridled action of the desires, show the same contrasts. Each vice is opposed to another vice of contrasted properties: avarice to extravagance, cowardice to foolhardiness, arrogance to cringing humility. Now if virtue is essentially the bridling of the desires by reason, it can consist only in always maintaining *a just mean between two opposite errors*. As a matter of fact, between every two vices there lies a quality which we regard as virtuous, and whose exercise we consider a condition of human happiness. Thus courage is a proper medium between cowardice and foolhardiness; self-control is a mean between sensuality and the ascetic's scorn of pleasure; liberality, between avarice and extravagance; magnificence, between meanness and ostentatious luxury; magnanimity, between submissiveness and insolence; pride, between immoderate ambition and false humility; gentleness, between insipidity and irascibility, etc. Above all these special virtues ranks the most perfect virtue, *justice*, which Aristotle, by a slight forcing of the comparison, regards as a right mean in that it lies between the commission of wrong and the sufferance of wrong; or, according to another passage, in that it gives to everyone his own, to none too much or too little. In the case of justice we can see how perfect virtue is attainable only in the State, for justice is impossible without the safeguard there furnished it by equal laws.<sup>1</sup>

It is characteristic of the realistic tendency of Aristotle's ethics that with him the virtue which Plato assigned to the third and lowest part of the soul—moderation or temperance—is made the source of all the virtues, even of justice. No less significant in this connection is the position occupied by pleasure and external goods. Although Aristotle gives to these only a subordinate value, still they

<sup>1</sup> *Nicom. Eth.* ii. 4-9, iii.—vii.; *Pol.* iii. 4.

seem to him necessary for perfect happiness; they often furnish aids to the development and exercise of the several virtues. Thus courage requires health of body; liberality, riches. For the very reason that they are auxiliary to ethics, however, such external goods are actual sources of permanent pleasure and satisfaction only to the virtuous.<sup>1</sup>

Having made moderation the central point of his conception of virtue, it necessarily follows for Aristotle that certain internal relations exist between the true or ethical and the so-called dianoëtic virtues. He distinguishes five virtues of the latter sort, or to use an expression which seems to us moderns more suitable in such a connection, five capacities and powers: knowledge, skill, insight, understanding, wisdom. Of these, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are the more theoretical; skill and insight the more practical virtues,—inasmuch as the former have an internal scope only, in thought, while the latter have a practical sphere as well, in action. Hence they are more closely related to the will and the ethical virtues. This is especially true of insight, which Aristotle describes as a deliberative function capable of discerning truth in particular instances on the basis of inherited experience. While it is not, indeed, the source of the virtues, which proceed rather from a will maintaining the proper mean between opposite desires; yet it is that which points out definite ends for virtuous action, since it informs the will as to what the proper mean in each case is. Insight has thus a kind of educative influence on the will. As in all education, habit and the consequent instinctive practice of the good bear an important part. That moderation which Aristotle, without including it in their number, regards as a prerequisite for all ethical virtues, is especially dependent on the habit of weighing opposite inclinations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Nicom. Eth.* x. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vi. vii. 1-12.

While, then, insight appears as an indispensable correlate even of the ethical virtues, Aristotle approaches still closer to the Socratic-Platonic view in his estimate of the supreme dia-noëtic virtue, *wisdom*. It is for him the union of understanding and knowledge: but its objects are not individual things; rather they are the highest and most general concepts. Although in his *Politics* and *Ethics*, especially in his discussions of Friendship in the *Ethics*, which form a kind of connecting link between ethics and politics, Aristotle tries to do justice to the claims of civic society and the importance of the practical virtues for it; yet the philosopher's personal bias betrays itself in his preference for the contemplative rather than the practical life, and for that virtue which gives the contemplative life its value, namely, *wisdom*. However highly he may estimate political life, if the careers of politician and philosopher are to be compared as regards their inner worth, there is no doubt in Aristotle's mind that the latter must be given the first place.

The highest satisfaction is assured by wisdom, not only because it is the virtue of the most exalted faculty of the soul, the reason; but because it alone is sufficiently independent of external conditions to allow of undisturbed exercise and to do without external sources of happiness. The generous man needs wealth, the brave man health; but the wise man relies on himself alone. Moreover Aristotle thinks that we can ascribe to the gods no externally directed activities. Just as their happiness is purely contemplative, so the highest happiness for man consists in the enjoyment of wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

Here the Aristotelian ethics sounds a note which foretells the future. If the contemplative life is most worth while, it is but a step to the conclusion that this contemplative happiness is to be sought in flight from the world, in with-

<sup>1</sup> *Nicom. Eth.* x. 7-10.



drawal from every practical activity. If, further, theoretical meditation is supposed to have a felicitic power which makes man approach the joy of the blessed gods, the next thing is to give the contemplative activity a religious turn, and regard it not only as like the divine life, but as an immediate merging of the human spirit in the divine. Already in what are called the Eudemian Ethics, which, though probably written not by Aristotle himself but by his disciple Eudemus, are classed among the Aristotelian writings, we find a religious tendency, in so far at least as knowledge of and reverence for the gods are here expressly termed the highest goods.<sup>1</sup> We may say in general that the variations from the master which are found among the Peripatetics all tend towards the views held by the leading philosophical sects of a later day.

### 3. THE STOICS AND EPICUREANS.

The philosophical schools of the Stoics and Epicureans were influenced by the changes which had taken place both in the political life and in the moral consciousness of the time. The political independence of the Hellenes was gone. With it vanished the source of that virtue of public spirit which had constituted an important element in the moral life of the past. Alexander's conquests had widened to a remarkable extent the horizon of the national views. Oriental ideas of religion, Oriental customs, had made their entrance. While the Greeks on the one hand were imparting the treasures of their culture to other nations, they were themselves becoming more and more imbued with a cosmopolitan spirit, which, though it laid greater stress on the duties of universal humanity, at the same time inevitably led to a preference of the

<sup>1</sup> *Eudem. Eth.* vii. 14-17. Cf. also ZELLER, *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics*, tr. by Costelloe and Muirhead, ii. pp. 423 ff.

moral interests of the individual over those of the political community. This change of attitude finds expression in the increased prominence which from this time on is assumed by *ethical* problems,—a philosophical tendency that was encouraged by the growing independence of the several theoretical sciences, many of which attained a high degree of development in the Alexandrian period.

(a) *Stoic Ethics.*

The ethics of the Stoa finds its closest affiliations with the past in Socrates, and in that Socratic School which according to its own opinion gave completest expression to the fundamental thought of the master's life and teachings, the *Cynics*. This is a reaction from the development of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy that is significant not only of the undue importance again ascribed, in the spirit of Socrates and his immediate followers, to ethics; but also of the *personal* direction taken by the ethical speculation of the day. The thing which his countrymen admired in Socrates, and even in some of his Cynic successors, Diogenes for instance, was less the contents of their doctrine than the image of their personality. Now, in proportion as the Stoics directed their efforts towards freeing their ethics from the influence of special political and social conditions, and thus making it at once an ethics of the individual and of humanity, it became clear that the best method of reaching this result was to derive their concept of the good and of virtue directly from that prototype of the perfect man which they recognised in Socrates, and, later, in certain distinguished members of their own school. Hence, we find in the Stoics the prevailing tendency to take a *descriptive* rather than a *normative* point of view in determining their concept of virtue; to describe the actual character of a perfectly virtuous life rather than to state maxims of duty; a tendency which was strengthened

by the pantheistic and deterministic leanings of their theology and natural philosophy. Hence, further, the Stoics not only revive the Socratic thought of the identity of knowledge and virtue, but take especial possession of the Socratic-Platonic doctrine of the unity of the virtues. True, this unity is for them not an inner identity of the virtues themselves, as in Plato's *Protagoras*, but their necessary combination in the unity of the moral personality. Still, even in this sense we find one of the virtues spoken of as the root of the others,—insight by Zeno, wisdom by Chrysippus,—and to this one the Stoics, influenced in part by the Platonic-Aristotelian division, subordinate the four cardinal virtues, insight, courage, moderation and justice. As regards the motives which lead to the exercise of these virtues, the Stoics do not rise above the Socratic standpoint in any essentials. The good is for them the useful, and at the same time that which is according to nature. It is in harmony with the theological character of their whole theory of the universe that they should regard the primary impulse of human nature as directed towards the useful and natural, and against the hurtful and unnatural. In accordance with this view they assign even to certain external goods, such as health or riches, at least a relative and conditional value. These goods are useful to the virtuous man; but to the bad man they may become harmful through the misuse to which they are liable. In themselves, therefore, they are neither good nor bad; they belong to the class of indifferent things, *adiaphora*, lying between good and evil. Since, however, especial emphasis is laid upon the moral dangers which such indifferent things carry with them; and since the care-free existence of the wise man who does not feel the want of such external goods is given the preference; the negative side of morals, the avoidance of evil, seems of far greater importance than the positive contents of the concept of virtue.

The sources of evil are, according to the Stoics, human passions, of which likewise they distinguish four,—pleasure, desire, grief and fear. These are maladies of the soul, which must be not merely restrained, as Aristotle and his disciples demanded, but wholly eradicated. Thus the negative virtue of *apathy* is more important for the Stoics than any of the positive virtues. The ideal picture which they draw of the virtuous wise man is chiefly characterised by this trait of indifference to pain and danger, to the vanity and pomp of the world; a disposition which holds itself remote even from sympathy, since the sorrows which claim our sympathy are not after all real evils. The Stoic sage is thus stern with others as with himself. Hence the individual will succeed best in preserving that repose of soul which constitutes true happiness if he retreats into solitude, where passions have no chance to assail him. The Stoics extol the joy of the contemplative life in quite a different spirit from that of Aristotle. Kings and statesmen can never be truly good and happy. Only the condition of the recluse philosopher who has abandoned all desires, and whom no passions can any longer disturb,—only this is perfect peace. But if perchance bodily pain threaten to overcome him, he willingly withdraws himself from life rather than forego the repose of his mind. Thus, as gloomy views of life became more and more prevalent among them, the Stoics came to regard suicide, if not exactly as a virtue, yet as a praiseworthy expedient for the avoidance of evil, and an act by which the wise man proves that life for him belongs among the indifferent things.

The practical ethics, too, of the Stoic philosophers is filled with this thought of contempt for the world. They are, it is true, far from undervaluing the social duties; the pantheistic character of their philosophy would make against such a tendency, since even in the sphere of ethics it requires a coherence [*Zusammenhang*] of individuals with each other and

with nature as a whole. But they insist with energy upon the indifference of class distinctions and national divergences. All men are of one race, are at bottom citizens of a *single* state; even in the slave one must esteem the man. Thus the Stoics become the first upholders of *cosmopolitanism*. It is quite comprehensible that they should regard the narrower civic duties as relatively subordinate. They recognised marriage in its moral aspect, but preferred the bond of *friendship*, which unites all the wise and virtuous by reason of their congenial disposition, even when they do not know each other. These statements are not always in accord with the praise which the Stoics elsewhere bestow on the self-sufficiency of the wise man. But the greater difficulty one has in reconciling self-sufficiency in its most ideal form with the universal needs of life, the more concessions to the ordinary view of life must one make in the sphere of practical ethics. Nevertheless, the ascetic character of the Stoic ethics is always apparent in the preference shown for the freest of social bonds, friendship, which is made independent, to a certain extent, even of direct spiritual intercourse.

(b) *Epicurean Ethics.*

As regards the practical applications just discussed, the ethics of the Epicureans follows a course wholly parallel to that of the Stoics; and in spite of unlikeness elsewhere, a certain similarity is noticeable in their fundamental views. This kinship is especially marked in two points: first, in the predominance of the *personal* element, which here, as with the Stoics, finds its expression in a description of the sage, enjoying true happiness, and shunning the stimulus of a public career; and second, in the strong emphasis laid on the *negative* side of happiness, the avoidance of all those pain-bringing disturbances which might affect it. While

with the Stoics the individualistic tendency is held in check by leanings towards cosmopolitanism and universal humanity, with the Epicureans it leads to an egoistic quietism, the motives for which consist in utilitarian considerations of the most trivial sort. The sect thus becomes guilty of an inconsequence, inasmuch as its members declare the State to be an arrangement created for the protection and use of man, while their own rule of life consists in not troubling themselves about the State. For this is the primary meaning of their proverb *λάβε βιώσας* (Live in retirement). Such an inconsistency is possible only from the point of view of that short-sighted egoism to which, when it has made the best choice for itself, the weal and woe of other men are a matter of indifference. Among the Epicureans as well as among the Stoics there is this lack of interest for positive political problems. The bonds of marriage are to them burdensome fetters. They too prefer *friendship* above all other unions, precisely because as the freest of all it involves the most advantage and the least disadvantage. The high value which the Greeks as a nation ascribed to friendship is expressed in the praise which the Epicureans bestow upon it. Further, while, like the Stoics, they emphasise repose of mind as an essential condition of happiness, the evil to be avoided is not, as with the Stoics, *passion*, but *pain*. Not apathy, but *ataraxia*, painlessness, is extolled as the blessed state. Thus, while, for the Stoics, virtue, since it consists in control of the passions, is a good to be sought for its own sake, and from whose possession true happiness first arises; for the Epicureans the relation is reversed. The goal of all effort is happiness, and virtue is only a means to this end. Hence the Epicureans consider *insight* (*φρόνησις*) to be the chief virtue, which is at the same time the source of all others; and among these others moderation, as essential to the maintenance of physical and

mental painlessness, is given a superior value. However closely ataraxia may seem to approach apathy, the two are far removed from each other by the fact that in the case of the latter, where all passions are stilled, no positive effort is allowable; while in the case of the former a positive worth is necessarily ascribed to the opposite of pain—to pleasure. Painlessness makes the enjoyment of pleasure possible, pleasure allows us to forget pain. Thus ataraxia enters wholly into the service of *eudæmonia*.

But the eudæmonism of the Epicureans assumes, in consequence of this dwelling on the importance of painlessness, a nobler character than that of the crude eudæmonism of their forerunners, the Cyrenaics. Only that pleasure which is not accompanied or followed by pain is a true aid to happiness. Sensuous pleasure, which always involves the danger of such an admixture of pain, is for that reason far inferior to intellectual pleasure, which is wholly free from this disadvantage. It is true that their materialistic conception of the world, borrowed from Democritus, would seem to make the distinction between sensuous and intellectual pleasures one of degree merely, the latter consisting chiefly in the memories which the former leave behind them. Still, a broader view is possible here; a view which as a matter of fact was taken by the adherents of the Epicurean doctrine, especially in later times. While some regarded sensuous pleasure as the chief source of happiness, others, like Epicurus himself, ascribed a higher worth to the exercise of friendship and the intellectual joys involved in intercourse with kindred minds; and still others, finally, laid so much stress on the purely negative element of painlessness that the picture they drew of the Epicurean sage scarcely differed from the Stoic ideal.

## 4. TRANSITION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

These mediating tendencies prepared the way for an *eclecticism* which, while it obtained some prevalence in Greece, proceeding especially from the Academic and Peripatetic Schools, received a later and fuller development in Rome. As regards ethics, to which it gave most attention, this eclecticism approached alternately the Stoic and Epicurean positions. But while these remnants of the Greek philosophy were striving in vain to keep alive fast expiring religious convictions, philosophic thought received a new and powerful stimulus through the influence which the Orient was beginning to exert on the Western countries, an influence largely religious in its sources. It was the *Neo-Platonic* tendency, which for several centuries had its seat in Alexandria, that brought about the transition from philosophical to theosophical ethics.

In these echoes of the ancient philosophy, again, we find something of an eclectic character. Especially do they show a mingling of Platonic and Stoic elements with the religious ideas of the ancient East. It is, in fact, the entrance of religion into the field of philosophical speculation that gives to the period its peculiar stamp. As a consequence, the ethical theory of the time may be divided into two parts: on the one hand profane ethics, less authoritative in its character, and concerned with the virtues of earthly life; and, on the other hand, religious ethics, which has to do with the higher life, aiming always at the divine. The former is closely related to its philosophical predecessors; it is Platonic in connecting morality with the doctrine of the pre-existence and immortality of the soul; Aristotelian in preferring contemplative to practical life, while acknowledging elsewhere the claims of the latter by a recognition of the political virtues; Stoic, finally, in its scorn of sensuous pleasures and



its demand for the eradication of the passions. This latter requirement is not, however, as with the Stoics, an end in itself; it is merely a prerequisite for the attainment of the highest happiness, which consists in direct contact with the divine, such as is possible only in a state of ecstasy where conscious thought ceases and the spirit loses itself in the primal being whence it proceeded.

And so it comes to pass that the traces of ancient philosophy to be found in mysticism are wholly extraneous and adventitious to the theory. It centres in *religious feeling* rather than in the moral consciousness. Neo-Platonic ethics is thus a return to the point from which the development of philosophical ethics set out; moral postulates are transformed into religious intuitions. But at the same time there has been a complete change in the contents of these moral postulates. Greek ethics, which though limited in scope to the national horizon, was yet instinct with the joy of life, has given place to an ethical philosophy which, while it recognises the broadly humanitarian character of moral problems, expresses the temperament of the hermit and ascetic. It is Neo-Platonism that undertakes the task of rendering the best results of Greek thought available for that system of morals which henceforward develops on the basis of Christian ideas. For it is partly in continuation of, partly in opposition to, the views of the Neo-Platonists that the beginnings of *Christian Ethics* arise.

## CHAPTER II.

## CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

## I. THE GENERAL BASIS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

THERE are *three* chief points of difference between the religious and moral philosophy of Christianity and that of ancient ethics.

The latter, like all early forms of religion, regarded *fear* as the ruling factor in determining the *relation between God and man*. For this motive of fear, which we find emphasised also in the Jewish theology, the teaching of Christ substitutes the motive of *love*, comparing the relation of God to man with that of a father to his child. Again, the thought of the fatherhood of God alters the conception of humanity which has hitherto prevailed. The limits of nationality and rank are lost sight of in considering *the relations of man to man*. *Community of faith*, the expression of our common sonship, becomes the only restricting consideration. Finally, from the thoughts of the fatherhood of God and of a common faith, whose external organ was the Church, spring the ideas which Christian philosophy developed on the subjects of *the origin and future destiny of man*. Since divine sonship and brotherhood in the faith can be thought of only as spiritual relations, we find the sensuous and spiritual natures of man placed in an opposition which may be compared to the moral opposition of evil and good: a view for which the heathen philosophy in many of its aspects had already paved the way. The dependence of the spiritual upon

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the sensuous nature is now, in accordance with Platonic thought, regarded as a bondage which is responsible for all the evil in the world. But the gospel of the divine fatherhood will not allow either that this bondage has always existed, or that it will be eternal. While the old oriental story of Paradise and the Fall furnishes an appropriate account of the original falling away from God; on the other hand the current ideas of Hades and Elysium offer a suitable form in which to reanimate the doctrine of a promised and hoped-for salvation.

But salvation, according to the Christian conception, cannot be effected by one's own agency; it is *Christ* who in the Pauline doctrine has saved guilty mankind by His sacrificial death. The community of the faithful founded in His mission has become the dispenser of the divine grace on earth. Although the consciousness of human guilt is forcibly expressed in this doctrine, yet in the thought of the Atonement there lies the germ of an external view of forgiveness, juristic rather than ethical, which is at least partially responsible for the worldliness of mediæval Christianity. Moreover, there is no doubt that the limitation of redemption to sharers in the Christian faith affected from the very outset the moral and humanistic value of the Gospel. The believer in Christ could look down upon the unbelieving heathen with a scorn greater than that of the Greeks for the barbarians; for the heathen were not only deprived of divine illumination in this present life, but destined to eternal damnation in a life to come. However, there are no motives more powerful than fear and hope in their operation on the human heart; and hence it was inevitable that the *Church* with its means of grace should come more and more to occupy the central point in the Christian system of belief. In proportion as the faith of the early Christians had to relinquish the hope of living to see Christ's return, while

the believer found himself forced to accommodate himself to this earth, so much the greater was the influence obtained by the *visible* state of God on earth.

While it was the development of religious ideas which determined the basal thoughts of Christian ethics, the latter obtained their philosophical form under the influence of those tendencies of ancient philosophy which were most akin to the Christian theory of the universe, namely, Platonism, and, to a certain extent, Stoicism. Of course the religious assimilation of these doctrines made necessary many transformations, which were not without their effect upon ethics. For the emanation theory of the Neo-Platonists, which long survived in the Christian sect of the Gnostics, the Church, influenced both by the Jewish monotheism and Christ's doctrine of the divine fatherhood, substituted a transcendent personal God; urged by the necessity of finding a mediation between God and the world, it borrowed from the emanation theory the idea of a division of the concept of Deity which yet did not affect its internal unity, and thus reached the doctrine of a Trinity, in whose three parts the three dominant elements in the Christian faith—the creative power of God, the divine sonship, and the community of the faithful—found their religious expression. But while Platonism had regarded matter as the ground of imperfection and evil, such a conception was too far removed from the world of sense to harmonise with religious views. The Logos of Christian religious philosophy is therefore no longer, as in the Jewish theosophy and in Neo-Platonism, a purely spiritual principle; it is transformed, under the double influence of the Jewish Messianic idea and the gospel of divine sonship, into the Son of God become flesh. Similarly, a continuance of spiritual existence only seems insufficient to meet the religious need of the times; instead of the Platonic conception of immortality we have the

dogma of the resurrection of the body, while at the same time the doctrine of pre-existence is set aside as an element indifferent so far as religious hopes are concerned.

Now the dogmas of the incarnation and resurrection make sensuous matter essential for the existence of the good both in this life and in the life to come. The Platonic derivation of evil from matter can therefore no longer pass unquestioned, even apart from the fact that the solution which it offers for the problem is too abstract to satisfy religious needs. It is just this problem of the origin of evil to which Christian philosophy, turning aside from the world and centering all its hopes on a future life and the second coming of Christ, directs its attention. And once more the solution is furnished by Oriental religious ideas. Oriental thought, especially Parseeism, had frequently given a religious expression to the opposition between a good and an evil principle. Within the Christian Church itself there springs up the sect of the Manichees, who combine Gnostic with Zoroastrian elements into a doctrine which opposes to God an original evil being, and in like manner assumes the existence in man of two souls,—one light and good, purely spiritual, the other bad, united to the body. Such a doctrine, however, is incompatible with the pure monotheism which is the foundation of Christianity. Hence the orthodox faith rejects the view that evil is primary in its nature, while adopting the idea of an incarnation of evil. Adam's fall is transferred from earth to heaven, and Satan becomes a fallen angel. He is Antichrist, the complete antithesis of Christ; and according to the doctrine of Irenaeus will like Christ some day become man and rule on earth till Christ returns, casts Antichrist with his followers into everlasting fire, and inaugurates the millennial reign, upon which the reign of the Father, everlasting blessedness, is to follow. Two at least of these conceptions were destined to become

a permanent part of Church doctrine: that of the incarnation of evil in Satan as the fallen angel, and the related thought, of no little ethical importance, that evil is not original, but came into the world with the fall of man. The assumption of such a special incarnation of the principle of evil does not, however, preclude the continued influence of the Platonic theory that matter contaminates spirit. Christian philosophy finds evil everywhere operative in the sensuous nature of man, in his sensuous impulses, his striving for sensuous good. Mortification of the flesh is therefore an important means to the attainment of divine grace. While this asceticism does not regard worldly possessions, marriage, and public activity as actually sinful, it finds a special merit in the abstemiousness which casts contempt on all such goods. In such ideas as these, necessarily limited in their application to a comparatively small part of the Christian community, we find the germ of a *twofold morality*, ethically worthless, which involves on the one hand a more rigid separation of the spiritual from the worldly realm, and on the other hand the development of monastic life.

That a theory of the universe which sprang from so various sources and hence included so manifold contradictions should for more than a thousand years have exerted a compelling influence upon minds among whom were numbered the greatest and most independent thinkers, is surely one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of the human intellect. Its explanation is to be found largely in the power of the fundamental ethical conceptions of love and grace, whose hold on humanity, with its deep need of consolation, was all the stronger by reason of the contrast they presented with the actual life of a rude and violent age. An important factor in the process by which diverse elements were unified into a single body of doctrine consisted in the unity of Church government, which now took the place of the original fellow-

ship of the faithful, and preserved unanimity of opinion by the force of external authority. These conditions are responsible for the twofold character of *constraint* which stamps itself upon Christian ethics. The religious consciousness is constrained into accepting the philosophic opinions received by the Church, while, on the other hand, philosophic doctrines are constrained into agreement with the articles of faith which religious tradition approves. The common product of religious faith and philosophical speculation, thus developed, is the body of Church dogma, which becomes definitive for the problems as for the first principles of ethics. Naturally, however, its lines are less firmly laid down at the beginning of Christian philosophy, when the contents of dogma is yet in the formative stage. Hence it is in this period that we find the views of the various Church philosophers exerting most influence upon the growth of the ecclesiastical structure.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. THE SYSTEM OF AUGUSTINE, AND THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

By far the most important teacher of the Church as regards his permanent influence upon ethics is Augustine. Christian literature hardly shows his equal in philosophic gifts. In epistemology he anticipates the fundamental thought of Descartes' *Meditations*; and his ethical discussions contain an analysis of the will, which, if we overlook its tendency towards dogmatism, surpasses in penetration almost everything that had been done up to his time.

But it is just upon this keen and remarkable mind that the current bondage to religious traditions and conceptions reacts most noticeably. Unable to give conceptual unity to

<sup>1</sup> The following exposition must confine itself to the chief points in the development of Christian ethics. A more thorough discussion of the subject will be found in W. GASS' *Geschichte d. christlichen Ethik*, especially vol. i., 1881, and in THEOB. ZIEGLER's work with the same title, 1886. On the corresponding development of dogma see HARNACK, *History of Dogma*, tr. by N. Buchanan.

the conflicting elements in his faith, he cast his influence all the more decidedly on the side of mysticism. In opposition to the Manichees, towards whom he was at first inclined, and who sought to solve the problem of evil by the dualistic hypothesis of two original beings, good and evil, he maintains the view that good was the sole primitive existence. Evil came into the world at the Fall through the arrogance of the fallen angel and of man; it is—and here we have a Platonic echo in the system of this Christian thinker, versed as he was in ancient lore—not itself a substance, but only an attribute, a deficiency in the good, which serves in its removal through the Atonement to manifest the divine justice. God has allowed evil that good may be brought about thereby, for *contrariorum oppositione saeculi pulchritudo componitur*—a thought whose influence has reached our own time.

In like manner Augustine stands for predestination of the will, as against *Pelagius* and his followers. It is not possible, as the Pelagians assume, for man's free will to obtain the good. Guilt having entered the world at the Fall, it is only the grace of God which is able to direct our will towards the attainment of any good. The Augustinian doctrine of predestination bears traces not only of the gloomy atmosphere of the age, with its pessimistic belief in the depravity of human nature; but also of a distinctly religious spirit. It is at least an emphatic expression of the conviction that human fate lies in God's hands. Indeterminism is always opposed to the deepest religious feeling.

Precisely this aspect of the Augustinian doctrine, however, was immediately influential in bringing about the later secularisation of Christian ethics. If the human will has no power to earn heaven, there is danger that practical morality will lose its value. For a single good or bad act is but a drop compared to the ocean of sin in which, by reason of its fall from God and original depravity, the



human race is lost. The spirit of idle resignation, to which this gloomy view gives rise, is far too sharply opposed to man's active moral nature to be lasting. The ineradicable impulse to win eternal happiness by one's own actions, finding itself powerless in the field of practical morality, necessarily comes to make the *external cult* the centre of moral and religious life. Prayer, obedience to ceremonial requirements, above all obedience to the Church as the visible kingdom of God,—these are now the essential marks of a pious life.

For this view Augustine is chiefly responsible, through the influence of the contrast which he drew between the temporal state and the state of God, the one of diabolical the other of heavenly origin; the one destined to be overthrown, the other to be finally victorious over the sinful world. The Pelagian controversy, too, is not without influence on the development of Church doctrine at this point. Pelagius, fighting for the freedom of the will, is chiefly concerned with assuring to the individual an independent power of co-operation in the saving of his own soul; while grace is still God's free gift, yet it can be obtained through one's own works. Pelagianism thus occupies a middle ground, endeavouring to make the mystical significance of the doctrine of faith more comprehensible by a treatment based alike on reason and on a careful consideration of the conditions of earthly life. It is thus an instance of that ever-recurring attempt to rationalise dogma which, starting with the heterodox sects of the first century, ends in the scholastic philosophy. The transition to scholasticism began when in the centuries after Augustine a 'Semi-Pelagian' tendency became apparent, which met the hierarchical need just because it united the heterogeneous elements of different systems. To Augustine's apotheosis of the Church it joined the doctrine of the utility of good

works, and thus became the starting-point for that externalisation of religious and moral conceptions which kept pace with the increasing worldliness of the Church itself.

### 3. SCHOLASTIC ETHICS.

The great object of Scholasticism in its prime was the transformation of articles of faith into truths of reason. Important as it thereby becomes in preparing the way for modern metaphysical speculation, it was quite as momentous for ethics, where the effort after logical clearness led by an inherent necessity to a preference for that external conception of moral principles, juristic rather than ethical, the germ of which already existed in many of the dogmatising utterances of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. The fact that this germ now ripened and bore luxuriant fruit was due ultimately to the inevitable and increasing secularisation of the Church, to which scholasticism as a whole formed the theoretical complement.

Thus we find the most prominent thinker of the eleventh century, *Anselm of Canterbury*, reducing the doctrine of the Redeemer, that vital point in the Christian dogma of the Atonement, to a kind of *jus talionis*, a balancing of guilt and retribution. Man has fallen; his guilt must be atoned for. But man himself, with his limited capacities, cannot make atonement for infinite guilt; therefore God has given His own Son to take upon Himself the guilt of the world. Only thus can infinite guilt be balanced by an action of infinite merit. The fact that this action is an event which takes place quite outside the religious and moral consciousness, and which hence has not the slightest relation to a possible transformation of the sinner's own nature, is left entirely out of account. On the other hand, the external character of the whole conception sufficiently explains why the benefit which falls to the lot of humanity, through

salvation, is limited to believers. Besides Christ's sanctifying merit, in which the individual has part without any act of his own, there is always necessary a subjective merit on the individual's part, which is, however, less that of moral disposition and conduct than of faith in grace and the Church's means of grace. The next stage of this doctrine is the belief which gradually obtains currency that in the lives of Christ and the saints there has been amassed a surplus of justifying acts, whose benefits the Church can distribute to individual sinners in proportion to their repentance and penance, or in proportion to their performance of ecclesiastical duties.

From the outset there was no lack of opposition to this profoundly immoral tendency of Church ethics. Generally speaking, such efforts were associated with the heterodox doctrines of patristic times. They were especially connected with the attempt of Pelagius and his followers to keep for the freedom of the will and consequent moral self-determination their ethical value. *Abelard*, particularly, as early as the twelfth century, emphasises in this connection the significance of the *disposition* and the *conscience*. By placing the distinction between good and evil not in the external character of the act, but in the inner motive behind it, he subordinates the mystical idea of the Redeemer to the conception of Christ as a moral example; and at the same time, closely akin here as in his sympathy with classical antiquity to the later Humanism, lays great stress upon the value of the individual moral personality.

This attempt to emphasise the internal aspect of morality as against the principle of obedience upheld by the power of the Church, found yet more decided expression in *Christian Mysticism*. In part, this tendency entered the service of the Church, in the mendicant orders of Franciscans and Dominicans, who placed the requirements of poverty and humility

first among their rules ; in part, espoused by individual men whose moral and religious natures were deeply stirred, it spread in silent opposition, or even in open resistance, to the hierarchical system. It is the mystical element in Christianity itself which makes against the secularisation of the Church in these forerunners of the Reformation. But just as this very mysticism had given rise to Augustine's apotheosis of the Church, so the monastic orders, devoted to mystical contemplation, became henceforth the most influential supporters of the hierarchical idea ; and for centuries still the chief current of Christian mysticism was under the direction of the Church.

But to these elements, which were inherent in the original contents of Christian doctrine, other influences are now added,—influences destined to bring about a gradual and fundamental alteration in the spiritual character of the age. From the ecstasy of the mystics arose the thought of the *Crusades*. But though the motives of these undertakings were religious, worldly interests bore an increasing share in their realisation, and their result was a rapid spread of the secular spirit to all spheres of thought. His ideal aim threw a transfiguring glamour over the knightly contestant for the possession of the Holy Sepulchre. Thus from these wars there sprang that flower of knighthood which, in the increased brilliancy of court life, bore as its fruit both secular science and secular art. The courtly art of poetry vied with the learning of the clergy in a rivalry all the happier in its results from the fact that for the first time since the decline of classic culture the sources of poetry were found in the national life and the popular speech. Moreover, the intellectual horizon of the time was widened by acquaintance with distant lands and people. Moham-medan culture, at this time superior in many respects to that of the West, began to exert an influence, in despite

of religious differences. The treasures of Alexandrian learning had since the eighth century passed into the hands of the Arabs. Mathematics and astronomy, medicine and philosophy, had flourished here; and among the philosophers it was Aristotle who was most zealously studied. This survival of ancient learning became known in the West from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and a many-sided zeal for knowledge, with a reviving affinity for secular problems, supplanted the strong theological bias of the preceding period.

The Scholasticism of the thirteenth century bears distinct traces of all these influences. As its aim is divided between maintaining the value of monastic life on the one hand and the worldly power of the Church on the other, so, in its system of philosophy, mystical contemplation and trivial logic-chopping, a supernaturalistic metaphysic, and an interest, of course purely theoretical, in empirical science are thoroughly interwoven. This lack of internal harmony in its theory of the universe is not least apparent in its *ethics*. The revival of secular interests, which found its scientific expression in the dominance of Aristotelianism, had an inevitable influence in the field of morality. But the Stagirite had been bold enough to free his ethical principles from all transcendental presuppositions and to limit them to the conditions of actual life. Such a standpoint was out of the question for Christian theology. The heathen philosopher had to be regarded through the medium of the Church's views at this point, far more than in his natural philosophy, where his guidance might safely be trusted. The natural result was an *eclectic* ethics, half religious and half realistic, which had in consequence of its mixed origin no lack of contradictions.

The chief upholder of this eclectic ethics is the greatest theologian of the thirteenth century, *Thomas Aquinas*. He

follows Aristotle implicitly in his division of the virtues into ethical and dianoëtic, and in the high estimate he places on the contemplative life. He terms all these virtues *natural*, however, and reduces them to the four Platonic cardinal virtues,—wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. Above them he places, following the Pauline doctrine, the three *supernatural* or *theological* virtues,—faith, love and hope. The former are acquired, the latter bestowed upon the soul directly by God. In accordance with their differing sources, the former lead to natural, the latter to supernatural happiness. For the rest, he seeks to establish a kind of connection between the two by the assertion that in consequence of the Fall we need God's help even in the attainment of the natural virtues. Thus God is the direct source of the theological virtues; the indirect source of the earthly virtues. The *theory of will* held by the Thomists is in complete accord with this twofold conception of virtue. The will is free, since it is subject to no necessity in the form of external constraint; but it is determined by our rational insight, which chooses of two different goods that which seems to it the best; and in order to distinguish in this choice what is really best we need the divine help. Thomas is thus a moderate determinist, and in his determinism there lurks even yet a shadow of Augustinian predestination. But a remarkable change of view has taken place, for the divine grace, which for Augustine is all, the human will being nothing in comparison with it, becomes for Thomas a mere *co-operator* with the will. The divine grace can be obtained through the merit of one's own works, and a certain worth is allowed to worldly happiness, as well as to that of a future life.

The intellectualistic character of scholastic psychology and ethics is very evident in the Thomistic theory of will. Throughout, the will is only the executive which carries into

operation the results of the deliberations and decisions of intelligence. The concept of *conscience* has a special importance here. For Aquinas, as for most of the scholastics, conscience is a process of thought and deliberation, which distinguishes between good and evil; it is a kind of syllogistic function which, like all rational thought, consists in definite premisses and a conclusion derived from them,—the judgment or decision of conscience. Emotion and will are thus left wholly out of account. The function of the latter is merely to execute the decisions of conscience, and while a certain amount of influence is ascribed to the emotions, they are described in terms so wholly intellectual that they seem like nothing more than an inferior order of rational processes.

The strong intellectualistic influence which prevailed for centuries in scholastic ethics shows how deeply intellectualism was involved in the religious and moral foundations of the philosophy of the time. Already we find the dogmatic arguments of Anselm of Canterbury betraying the effort to substitute lucidity of logical evidence for depth of religious feeling. There were *two* conditions in particular which gave to religious and moral philosophy this peculiar stamp. The first was the externalising of religious life. As ceremonial observance and obedience to the requirements of faith came to be more and more emphasised, there grew up a tendency to regard the energy of the moral will, inseparable as it is from freedom of personal conviction, as of little importance compared with theoretical belief and knowledge. The moral defects of this system of ethics are thus the inevitable counterpart of its lack of religious liberty. Further, the lives of its founders were responsible for an intellectualistic tendency in the scientific formulation of scholastic ethics. The natural product of monastic seclusion was a system of morals where contemplation and

reflection took the place of moral action. And the current belief that the monastic life was peculiarly holy justified these moral philosophers in elevating their own ideal of life to the position of an ethical ideal for the whole human race. Intellectualism is thus rooted deep in the religious philosophy of Catholicism, even as the ethics of will and personal freedom, in spite of many lapses, which extend to the present day, is the very life principle of Protestantism.

This lack of freedom and breadth of view explains why ethics should be the field where scholastic philosophy can point to the fewest original results. Christian doctrines and the ancient theory of the virtues are joined without any attempt at reconciliation; and the care with which individual instances of virtue are discussed makes the lack of any inner coherence more apparent. Consequently the one strong point of scholastic ethics lies in the direction of that tendency which always makes its appearance where really great and creative ideas are lacking,—of *casuistry*. While special cases, particularly those whose decision is a doubtful matter, are discussed with the greatest possible thoroughness, usually from a purely logical standpoint, there is often betrayed a shocking lack of comprehension of the moral value of everyday life and its conditions, such as honour: matters of which the contemplative seclusion of monastic life afforded, of course, no adequate experience. We have here the source of that 'ethics of probability' which is the natural outcome of a casuistic treatment of moral problems, and may be found to-day in the ethical compendiums of the Jesuits.



#### 4. THE FALL OF SCHOLASTICISM AND THE ETHICS OF THE REFORMATION.

A single step was all that was necessary to bring about a complete separation between Thomas, with his adherents, and Augustine, with the older scholasticism. This step was taken by an opponent of the great Church teacher, a nominalist and a thoroughgoing indeterminist. He regards the will as absolutely free; rational insight does not determine it, since man may be led by erroneous ideas; the divine will does not determine it, for it may choose the bad as well as the good. We have here a complete reversal of Augustine's views. Happiness is not secured by grace, but by one's own merit. And merit does not consist in a spirit of pious resignation, but in external obedience to the requirements of religion and ethics. While in its conception of moral life the new theory seems to mark the extreme stage of the secularising tendency in Christian ethics, it seeks to compensate for this fact in the matter of religious obedience. No more effective way of solving the problem could have been found than that chosen by *Duns Scotus*, and still more definitely by his successor *William of Occam*,—the transference of indeterminism from the human to the divine will. God requires obedience to the moral law, not because it is good, but because it is *His* law; and the moral law is good not in itself, but only as the expression of the divine will. God might have willed the contrary, and even then His will would have been good.

Thus Christian ethics ends in *scepticism*, albeit a scepticism whose aim is to furnish a new support for faith, by declaring its contents to be incomprehensible. But in ranking moral laws among articles of revelation, it casts a reflection upon the moral value even of religious conviction. For if the moral law is based upon a divine decree, essentially arbitrary

and casual in character, there is no possible guarantee that its content is invariable. Indeterminism, applied to the divine will, becomes indifferentism. As soon as the moral law lost its firm basis in the religious consciousness—and for this the most influential cause lay in the externalising of the religious life—it was an easy matter to transfer indifferentism from the divine to the human will, and to elevate *egoism* to the place of the supreme moral principle.

The *Reformation*, directing its attacks against the abuses of the Church, the erroneous traditions which falsified the original doctrines of the faith, and the rationalistic tendency of scholasticism, sought to heal the breach between morality and religion. In opposition to the secular ethics of the Thomists and the indeterminism and indifferentism of the Nominalists, it revived the views of the first Christian century; while at the same time it set a higher value on active morality and practical freedom of the will. Finally, by its rebellion against Church tyranny in matters of belief, it advanced the cause of free scientific investigation, and together with the Renaissance of classical antiquity and the sudden development of natural science effected a complete revolution in the views of the age.

It cannot be said of the Reformation any more than of Humanism, that it produced its own independent system of scientific ethics. But it did infinitely more: the radical transformation of religious and moral conceptions of life which it brought about opened new fields for ethical speculation. Not in monastic asceticism and unworldly mysticism, not in outward forms of obedience and sanctification by works does Luther see the justification of the sinner; but in a renewal of the inner man. He regards morality as lying not in the act itself, but in the disposition and tendency of the will from which the act proceeded. The liberating and atoning power of faith lies in the fact that it makes man do

right by an inner necessity rather than by obedience to law. Hence no external standards can be applied to measure distinctions in the morality of actions. God has placed man in the world of reality, and has given to each his own tasks, in the duties of his own calling and life.

Christianity, repelled by the moral wilderness of declining heathendom, had begun its existence as a community of believers set apart from the world and expectant of future salvation. Then came its victorious career through the world. Its reception as the world's religion necessarily involved it in inconsistencies, whose consequences, especially for Christian ethics, were most serious. Only a Christianity *adapted to the needs of the world*, like the Christianity of the Reformation, could solve these inconsistencies. In this sense it is not from the Protestant standpoint alone that the Reformation may be said to have saved Christianity. Even on the side of Catholicism its tendency was to transform, not indeed dogma, but the prevailing conception of life. And with its religious significance, the ethical meaning of the Reformation is intimately connected. In the personality as in the opinion of Martin Luther belief and practice were identical, and so, instead of that reverence for the contemplative life which in Christian mysticism led to a total perversion of moral fact by religious feeling, we have an emphatic declaration in favour of an active Christianity, for which love means not the sentimentalities of feeling, but the joyful fulfilment of love's duties. The ethics of the Reformation is thus decidedly of the opinion that the sphere of morality is to be found in real life, and in the duties which his calling and station impose upon the individual; and further, that the noblest power of man is not knowledge, not speculative absorption in religious thoughts, but a *will*, which seeks the good for no external ends, but for its own sake alone. Though Luther, like Zwingli and Calvin, felt

himself strongly drawn, from the very depth of his religious feeling, towards the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, yet for all three *practical* freedom of the will is the beginning and end of moral action. An act is good not because it harmonises with the law, but because the good is freely chosen. Thus, in opposition to the scholastic intellectualism, which had subordinated will to knowledge and described conscience as a faculty of judgment and inference, the Reformation regards the moral will as that power of the human soul which ranks above all the powers of thought and knowledge.

It was by its defence of these fundamental principles of practical ethics, rather than by the further elaborations of its ethical theory, which remained in many respects under the influence of dogmatic and even in part of scholastic traditions, that the Reformation determined the tendency of *modern ethics*. It was not to be expected that the Reformation spirit would develope to its final result without arousing opposition from many quarters, or that it would escape the effects of the older forces which worked along with it. The period of Enlightenment which followed the Reformation may almost be said to have inclined more to the Nominalism and Intellectualism of departing Scholasticism than to the Protestant principle of freedom. Hence the influence upon ethics of the new quickening of the religious consciousness which took place in the next period was rather negative than positive. While it is to the Reformation that thought chiefly owes its emancipation from the authority of the Church, the subsequent developments of ethics are distinctly of the nature of a reaction against the extreme religious tendency of the previous age. Here, as in all other departments of knowledge, we see the influence of the powerful impetus given to science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was this spirit which stimulated the applica-

tion of empirical investigation even to moral facts and the derivation of these facts from the natural conditions of human life. Before long, however, we find a *metaphysical* tendency running counter to *Empiricism*, a tendency which, while it seeks in part to give a new expression to the standpoint of religious ethics, and to reconcile it with that of secular ethics, may also be said to have worked with empiricism, though after a different fashion, for the secularisation of morals, in that it aims to substitute philosophical concepts for religious ideas.

## CHAPTER III.

## MODERN ETHICS.

## I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPIRICAL ETHICS.

(a) *Bacon and Hobbes.*

SCHOLASTICISM and certain tendencies in Protestantism had combined to prepare the way for a more secular ethics, which was chiefly occupied with investigating the empirical conditions of moral life. On the one hand, the Thomistic distinction between natural and theological virtues had allowed freer play to worldly influences; on the other hand, the Protestant sects had revived in their controversies the dispute of the first Christian centuries concerning the worth or worthlessness of the activity of the human will.<sup>1</sup> The Arminians and Latitudinarians, in opposition to the mystical view of the Atonement held by Luther and Calvin on the authority of Augustine, sought, like the Pelagians before them, to emphasise freedom of will and personal merit. This more liberal attitude involved a larger tolerance towards the adherents of other faiths. While religion was still valued, it began to be regarded rather as the completion and final stage of morality than as its indispensable condition; hence the natural inference that if a man only obeyed the requirements of morality, he might be happy in any religion. It was upon this basis that the empirical tendency of moral philosophy developed,—a tendency whose starting-point was in England.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. PÜNJER, *History of Christian Philosophy of Religion from the Reformation to Kant*, translated by W. Hastie.

As elsewhere, so in the realm of ethics, the *Baconian philosophy* opened new fields for thought. Bacon, who intentionally avoided conflict with theology by relegating religion to a future life, and claiming this present world as the province of philosophy, divided the problem of the *Summum Bonum*, as belonging wholly to religion, from the philosophy of morals, which has to do only with practical morality in the present life, and with the finite and relative goods thereby attainable. According to him this practical morality is independent of religious convictions; even the atheist may adopt it. True, the perfection of man is attained only when religious feeling is added to and elevates the ethical sentiments. But the superstitious errors of religion are hurtful to morals; indeed, superstition and the fanaticism that springs from it are more dangerous to morality than unbelief. Bacon's position thus resembles that of the philosopher whom of all the ancients he most hated, Aristotle; that is, he completely separates the spheres of religion and ethics. But unlike his great predecessor, his problem is not so much to define the concept of the Good and classify the virtues on the basis thereby obtained, as to investigate the sources and motives of morality, and, above all, its applications. His criticism on previous philosophers, here as in other fields, touches their neglect to make any practical application of the method of discovery. Bacon, however, regards as the source of morality the *Lux naturalis*, the natural law dwelling in every man; concerning whose origin he gives no further account, so that it remains doubtful whether he means an innate faculty or a power of insight which arises from experience. Bacon here fails to distinguish between the two opposite tendencies which developed in later English ethics. On the other hand, he regards the estimation of the different forms of moral good as wholly a matter of experience, and thus seeks to base his most

important moral distinctions on the actual relations of human life. Hence for him the good coincides under all circumstances with the *useful*. The useful, again, has a double object: the welfare of the *individual* and that of the *community*. Individual welfare consists in the satisfaction of the individual's natural instincts, self-preservation, self-perfection and reproduction. The welfare of the community consists in the satisfaction of those needs which spring from the relations of the human species, and which impose upon every individual certain duties towards humanity at large as well as towards the particular sphere of society in which he finds himself. As for the question whether individual or social welfare is to be preferred, Bacon thinks there can be no doubt about the answer, for Nature herself points out the true way, by striving at all times, often at the expense of the individual, to preserve the species and the whole. True virtue, therefore, consists in *action for the common good*; and he objects, evidently not with entire justice, to the theories of antiquity, on the ground that they had in mind only individual welfare. Such a supposition, he thinks, is the only one that will account for their wholly perverted view that the contemplative life is to be preferred above all others; whereas as a matter of fact the life of *action* is the only one worth while.<sup>1</sup>

Three points are especially noteworthy about these views of Bacon's, whose value lies rather in their suggestiveness than in their thoroughness. First, we note the complete separation of morality from religion, the *secularisation* of ethics; second, the equally complete separation of ethics from all *metaphysical* presuppositions, and the substitution of an effort to discover the *psychological* motives of morality, motives whose nature is as yet left

<sup>1</sup> *De dignit. et augment. scient.*, lib. vii. *Sermones fideles*, espec. 16, 17, 56-59.



somewhat indefinite. In the third place, we have the assumption of public utility as the ultimate end of morals, and the consequent identification of the moral with that which is beneficial to the majority.

As regards these three points the work of Bacon was continued by Hobbes. Although the absolutism of the latter reflects the peculiar influence of the age in which he lived and the political party he espoused, yet in regard to the general basis of his thought he is on common ground with the later liberal adherents of the Baconian doctrine. But he surpasses them all in penetration and keenness of understanding. This logical bent, moreover, is the chief cause of the onesidedness of his views. For him the life of feeling does not exist. Like the Scholastics, he wishes to reduce everything to the clearness of logical and mathematical ratiocination. While this aim makes him a most decided partisan of the Baconian doctrine of utility, yet it is irreconcilable with the Baconian separation of the spheres of religion and ethics. For Hobbes, the natural moral law consists in a correct weighing of the beneficial or harmful consequences of an act. A breach of the law is therefore an error of the understanding merely; it can proceed only from false deduction, since nobody intentionally acts contrary to his own advantage. It is impossible that divine law, which is contained in the moral teachings of Holy Scripture, should have any other contents than that of natural law. Just as the latter furnishes a confirmation of the truth of Christianity, so the former finds its sanction in the latter. Further, the civil law, like the religious law, cannot contradict the law of nature, for its aim is merely to determine what is useful to individuals in their common life together. Thus these three laws have the same object, the advantage and welfare of

mankind. In the event of an apparent conflict between them, which can result only from some error, Hobbes has no doubt as to the solution. The decision cannot rest with *individual* opinion, unless the peace of society, that indispensable condition of all useful endeavour, is to be destroyed; nor can the commands of religion be decisive, for they rest on individual conception and interpretation. The *civil law* alone, then, must be the supreme court of appeal. Not only must it settle every conflict between individual interests; but the final determination of the true contents of religious commands, as they are to be understood by everyone, must rest with it alone. Hobbes, therefore, brands all forms of religion that are not sanctioned by the State as superstitious. It would certainly be an injustice to the acuteness of the philosopher to suppose that he overlooked the possibility of a special case, where the civil lawgiver would be wrong and the opposing individual conscience right. Such a case is of course logically possible for Hobbes as for us; but he refuses to admit that it would ever be *practically* real, apparently for two reasons. First, the civil law has in view the welfare of all individuals, while the individual is in the first instance looking out for his own welfare only; hence the latter will more readily err. Further, the individual is not in a position to advance his own interest in the absence of the requisite public security. Since the supremacy of the civil law is the condition of the individual's effective activity, it must always be formally right, though it may be for the time materially wrong.

This position, which lays no restrictions upon the supremacy of political legislation over the individual will—a supremacy indispensable, indeed, within certain limits—is intimately related to Hobbes' psychological derivation of the moral law and the legal order. The fundamental thought here is Bacon's, the thought that utility always determines human

action. But while Bacon discriminated between individual and social welfare, and referred the effort after each to a different instinct, according to Hobbes self-love is the motive of all action; the individual seeks to further the general welfare only in so far as he thereby serves his own ends. This egoistic conception of human nature leads to the view that the state of nature is a strife of all against all. To strengthen this position Hobbes appeals to the fact that even in the civilised state distrust everywhere governs human actions, and that everyone associates with and loves those from whom he expects protection and the furtherance of his own interests. Thus egoism is for him the only basis of the political order. The existence of the latter rests on the conviction that the welfare of all individuals is best attained when the many wills are subordinated to one. Absolute monarchy, therefore, is the best form of government.<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, we find Bacon's views developed in the three directions which he had already pointed out. *The separation of ethics from religion* is completed by the distinction drawn between the three spheres of moral law: natural law, based on individual insight; civil law, based on the knowledge and will of the authorities; and religious law, which has its source in revelation. These three laws are, however, regarded as different forms of one and the same moral law, and in doubtful cases the civil law is made supreme over the other two. Further, the *moral motives* are now more exactly defined: they are resolved into logical reflection concerning what is useful and harmful; hence, moral action and logically correct action are made equivalent. Accordingly, while the derivation of natural law is, quite in the Baconian spirit, exclusively psychological and logical, special metaphysical assumptions

<sup>1</sup> *De Corpore Politico*, pars i.; *De Cive*, lib. i., cap. ii.-iv.; lib. iii., cap. xv.; *Leviathan*, pars i.; *Human Nature*, chap. vii.-xiii.

now become necessary to explain the agreement of religious and civil with natural law. In the case of religious law, it is assumed that we have, under the form of revelation, the same contents to which reason alone would have led; in the case of civil law, that, on account of natural egoism, the original state was one of war, which again could only be obviated by means of rational deliberation, through the recognition of a supreme will. As the *ultimate end of morality* we have the advantage of the individual; the welfare of the whole being considered only in so far as it includes the welfare of all individuals. Thus the concept of common welfare, left indeterminate by Bacon, is more accurately defined, and its opposition to individual welfare is removed. This is, however, at the expense of the former concept, which entirely loses its independence by being reduced to the sum of individual welfares.

(b) *John Locke and the Intellectualism of the  
Cambridge School.*

It is not surprising that a theory which ran so destructively counter to all the views on religious ethics current up to that time, and which did not hesitate to proclaim egoism as the ultimate and justifiable spring of moral actions, should call forth contradiction. But it is significant of the prevailing tendency of thought in the period, that the polemic against Hobbes which was begun chiefly by the theologians should employ, in part at least, the same pre-suppositions as those of Hobbes' own philosophy. This is especially true of the proposition that morality is always based upon right insight, *recta ratio*. It is this assumption which governs the whole ethical system of the Cambridge theologian, Cudworth, and which its own originator called

Intellectualism.<sup>1</sup> In reality, this system is a later growth of scholastic Intellectualism in Protestant soil. At the same time, it is in certain fundamental principles influenced by the Cartesianism which had sprung up in France and Holland just previously.

Cudworth, like Hobbes, regards man as a purely rational being; feelings and emotions have for him no existence. This similarity, however, only serves to emphasise his difference from Hobbes on the question of the origin of rational intuition. Human reason is an emanation from the divine reason; moral ideas are innate truths. He thus reclaims for religious commands their unconditional supremacy over civil law and the individual conscience. This intellectualistic ethics, in its endeavour to emphasise the primary nature of moral ideas, and to trace them under all forms of religious conception, compares them after Descartes' fashion to geometrical intuitions, as being in like manner contained in the mind *a priori*. Hence a mere statement of them is enough; they are as little susceptible of or dependent upon proof as mathematical axioms.

It is self-evident that this appeal to direct internal intuition is no very convincing refutation of Hobbes' attempted deduction of morality from egoism. Intellectualism is supplemented at this point by one of the most influential of the earlier English moralists, *Cumberland*.<sup>2</sup> He expressly states that the end of morality is the furtherance of the common welfare. But he does not regard the common welfare as identical with the sum of individual welfares, even though

<sup>1</sup> *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*. London, 1678. (Lat. edition by MOSHEIM; 2nd ed. Lugd. Bat., 1773). Cf. especially Book i. chap. iv., No. 8-14, and chap. v. The doctrines of Intellectualism are more briefly expressed, though mixed up with all kinds of mysticism, in HENRY MORE's *Enchiridion ethicum*, lib. iii., opp. omn. i. Londini, 1679.

<sup>2</sup> *De legibus naturae disquisitio philosophica*. Londini, 1672. Cf. especially chaps. i., iii., and v.

rational deliberation must prove to everyone that his happiness is best attained by promoting the general welfare. As a matter of fact, even the legislator makes use of this principle in punishing crimes against the community by the infliction of personal injury on the transgressor. Since Hobbes' conception is now completely reversed, the contents of the moral law being made to refer *directly* to the good of the whole, and only indirectly to the good of the individual, through our knowledge that our own welfare depends on that of society, it is clear that Hobbes' theory of an original state of war can no longer be maintained, assuming as it does that egoism is the sole spring of action. War is a later product; the natural and original state of man is peace, and mankind is urged by the most powerful motives to preserve peace and avert war, since the former is associated with the pleasurable feelings of benevolence, and the latter with the painful feelings of envy and hatred. Further, only on the assumption that benevolence is a primary instinct can we regard natural law as a part of the divine commands. For since it was God's will to give us the knowledge that our duty lies in labour for the common good, He must have endowed us in this life with benevolence and trust, not enmity, as innate attributes. Greater stress is thus laid on *emotion*, in opposition to Hobbes and the Intellectualists, although it is not yet placed in conscious antithesis to reflection. Rational insight, however, retains its importance in the choice of special means and in the performance of particular actions. Thus the soul is neither *tabula rasa*, acquiring ideas only through the medium of sense-perception and reflection; nor does it bear the ideas as preformed copies in itself: the moral law, like reason, is latent within the mind, and is first brought into clear consciousness through the intercourse of the individual with his fellow-men.

These views, which represent in many points the *via*

*media* between the extreme theories of Cumberland's predecessors, may also be said to indicate the divergent tendencies which developed in later English ethics. Cumberland, in his conception of natural law as the voice of God, reaching consciousness by way of the natural development of reason and teaching man what is harmful or useful to him, is the precursor of the later *theological utilitarianism*. Further, by opposing *benevolence* to natural egoism, he prepares the way for that *social ethics* in which Locke is his immediate successor, and here combines Locke's standpoint of *reflection* with the later *ethics of feeling*. Finally, by identifying the moral end with the welfare of the whole, he returns to Bacon's starting-point, and represents a tendency permanently influential in English ethics. But since, in spite of the distinction he draws between the good of the whole and that of the individual, he recognises an internal reciprocity between the two, and gives no sufficient explanation of the nature of the former; the question is still open as to whether the welfare of the whole has an independent existence in the Baconian sense, or whether it does not ultimately consist, as Hobbes maintained, in the welfare of individuals.

The most important influence in the decision of this question was that of *John Locke*, whose labours in the field of ethics, as elsewhere, were less distinguished by the novelty of his ideas than by the circumspection of his judgment, and his careful avoidance of such extreme views as might seem paradoxical to healthy human reason. The latter failing having been the especial weakness of that far bolder and more original thinker, Hobbes, Locke is especially anxious to steer clear of Hobbes' radicalism; while at the same time he opposes the doctrine of the Cartesian Intellectualists that moral principles are innate truths, and like Hobbes regards them as truths acquired by reason.<sup>1</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book i., chap. iii.

while Hobbes had rather asserted than actually proved this position—had indeed in his assumption, based on logical evidence, of the universal validity of moral norms, made a supposition which was closely akin to the views of Intellectualism itself—Locke undertook to disprove completely the innateness of moral ideas by the opposite course of pointing out individual differences and the uncertainty which always attaches to these ideas. Like Hobbes, however, Locke regards *self-love* as the ultimate motive of all moral actions, and analyses it more minutely as regards its origin and effects.<sup>1</sup> In deriving the moral instincts from the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, he seeks, like Cumberland before him, to show that they spring from the observation of social relations and of the useful and harmful consequences which result from action in these relations. Hence the assumption of primary benevolence seems to him superfluous: all the effects which have been ascribed to it may be explained, he thinks, by our subjective sensibility to pleasure and pain, and the powers of reflection connected therewith. On the other hand, he is careful not to assume with Hobbes an original state of war; he is content with showing that from the outset the individual's endeavour to secure happiness and avoid pain, aided by reflection, must have brought about effects directed towards the general welfare. This empirically obtained knowledge concerning what is beneficial and harmful constitutes for Locke the *lux naturalis* which Bacon and Hobbes had regarded as the universal guide of moral action. Locke, however, neither separates this natural law from religious law, like Bacon, nor co-ordinates the two like Hobbes; his thought is rather that just as we know God from His works, so we become conscious of the divine commands through moral experience; and in this wholly altered sense he maintains

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, book ii., chaps. xx., xxi.,



with the Intellectualists that the divine commands reach us through the light of nature. We receive them, besides, more directly and certainly through revelation, which thus differs from the natural law arising from experience, not in its content, but only in the manner of its communication to men.<sup>1</sup> This conception of the relation between revelation and natural development marks the first appearance of a thought which was fundamental for the rationalistic theology of the Enlightenment,—a thought, moreover, which Lessing carried out in his *Ideas on the Education of the Human Race*.

From natural law, of which religious law is thus only a special form, Locke distinguishes, further, the *civil law*, to which he adds as a restraining factor the *law of public opinion*. This latter corrects the civil law, partly preventing misuse of it, partly rendering its further development possible.<sup>2</sup> Hobbes' rigid conception of political law is thus avoided. Supremacy in this triumvirate of moral laws, however, belongs neither to political law, as with Hobbes, nor to religious law, as with the Intellectualists, but to *natural law, which has an empirical origin in our sensations of pleasure and pain and in the power of reflection*. This law takes precedence of the religious law communicated by revelation, for while the two are alike in content, natural law is the broader, and is accessible to all men. It takes precedence of civil law and the law of public opinion, for these spring from the same *lux naturalis*, and are thus only practical proofs and applications of natural law. They constitute, however—and here Locke remains true to the formal standpoint of Hobbes—the tests which in practical life are the first to decide between the moral and the immoral.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, book iv., chaps. x., xviii., xix.; *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Works, 1751, vol. ii., p. 509.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, book ii., chap. xxviii., § 7 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, book ii., chaps. xx. § 2, and xxviii. § 5.

Thus in his conception of the moral motive as of the moral end, Locke returns in essentials to the views of Hobbes. For him the moral motive is self-love ; the end of morality is the welfare of the whole, which is made up of the welfare of all individuals. He avoids, however, the metaphysical hypothesis of a pre-social state of mankind, and prefers to make the tacit assumption that the same psychological motives have always governed the human race, and hence have always produced the same results. Rather more stress is laid upon the *emotional* aspect of these motives than has been the case hitherto, pleasure and pain being mentioned as the only springs of our action. The intellect, however, still plays the leading rôle. Locke's only reason for objecting to primary benevolence is that in his opinion reflection does all that benevolence could do. Pleasure and pain are thus not, as with the ancient Hedonists, properly motives of human action ; they are its necessary conditions ; but the decision as to the content of action always proceeds from reflection. In this connection Locke even draws a comparison between the application of moral rules to particular cases and the application of mathematical axioms. He may have had practical morality chiefly in mind here, but such statements clearly bear the closest relation to his opinion that *all judgments on moral values are the results of rational insight and intellectual deliberation*.

This opinion connects Locke with a tendency which may properly be called that of the *younger Intellectualists*. They are distinguished from the older school by their greater inclination towards Empiricism ; and from Locke by his peculiarly subjective view of morality and consequent wholly formal proof of its universal validity. Their attempt, on the other hand, is rather to show the *objective reality* of the moral law, from which its obligatory force necessarily follows. The principal upholders of this objective Intellectualism are

William Wollaston and Samuel Clarke.<sup>1</sup> According to their views moral norms possess an objective reality, which, as Clarke assumes, is equal to that of mathematical and physical laws ; so that a transgression of law in the moral realm is like a change in the properties of bodies which breaks the laws of nature in the physical world. As truth consists in the agreement of our ideas with the nature of things, so good consists in the agreement of our acts with things. These thinkers regard morality as so completely independent of any arbitrary and subjective control, that they hold it to be impossible even for God, having made things what they are, to make a voluntary alteration in them. The nature of each thing has been unalterably fixed by Him ; to act according to this nature is, in Wollaston's opinion, to act morally and in obedience to God. Just as God has given to nature unvarying laws which He never breaks, so, according to Clarke, He has given to all things a certain fitness to each other, in which their moral nature consists.

Here we have Intellectualism pushed to such an extreme that the specific contents of morality as such is almost wholly obscured. Wollaston ranks moral wrong with intellectual error ; Clarke, influenced by the natural philosophy of Newton, regards it in the light of a violation of the laws of nature. In spite of this defect, however, their attempt to prove the objectivity of morals, as against Locke's subjectivism, is not without importance, and even in later times similar attempts on the part of English moralists have not been wanting.

<sup>1</sup> WOLLASTON, *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, 6th ed. London, 1738. The most important passages are quoted in ERDMANN'S *History of Modern Philosophy*, vol. ii., part i., § 281, 3. CLARKE, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, etc.

(c) *Shaftesbury and the English Ethics of the Understanding.*

Besides the revolt of the later Intellectualists against the subjective and formal character of Locke's defence of the universal validity of morals, opposition was called forth by another point in his theory, a point where the Intellectualists agreed with him. This was his complete reduction of moral ideas to intellectual truths. Locke had, indeed, recognised pleasure and pain as individual motives, but had not shown the relation between this emotional element and moral action. It is *Shaftesbury* who corrects the extreme Intellectualism of all previous ethical speculations. Surpassing all his predecessors in the acuteness of his æsthetic sense, he is the first to prove the primary character of moral *feeling*, and the impossibility of deriving it from any consideration of the useful or harmful consequences of an action. In his opinion the primary and immediate character of moral feeling proves that morality is based on *emotions* and *propensities* whose source is in man's natural organisation, and which can become objects of deliberation only *secondarily*, in which case they give rise to moral *judgments*. There are according to *Shaftesbury* three classes of these primary affections: (1) the *social* affections, directed towards the welfare of society: these, by way of emphasising their intimate connection with human nature, he calls by the inexact term of 'natural affections'; (2) the *egoistic* affections, which aim only at personal welfare; and (3) such affections as are useful neither to oneself nor to the public, and which he calls 'unnatural affections.' Under this head are classed hatred, wrath and the passions generally. Morality, then, consists in a *right relation between the social and the egoistic affections and in the absence of those which are useful neither to oneself nor to others*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit*. Cf. also GIZYCKI, *Die Philosophie Shaftesbury's*, Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1876, pp. 73 ff.

Here Shaftesbury returns to the basal thought of the Aristotelian ethics: he regards the moral as the moderate, the harmonious. But his method of reaching moderation differs from Aristotle's: he believes virtue to consist not, generally speaking, in a just mean between opposite qualities, but in a just mean between the selfish propensities and those directed towards the public good. Ascribing as he does equal primariness to the social and to the selfish propensities, he stands with Cumberland, in decided opposition to Hobbes, and indeed to Locke. Against the former, more especially, he maintains an optimistic view of human nature. Man is, originally, not fierce and malignantly disposed towards his fellows, but peaceable and benevolent; though Shaftesbury grants that this fundamental kindliness is not immediately apparent, but requires and allows of development and gradual perfecting.<sup>1</sup> It is the task of moral education to help us to reach a clearer understanding of our own being. In this sense morality, though it is rooted in human nature, may yet be regarded as an art; a new proof of that likeness between the moral and the beautiful, already apparent in the fact that both are governed by the ideas of measure and harmony. Another point of similarity between them is that the moral, like the beautiful, produces satisfaction immediately and through itself alone. Happiness is thus not only a result but a part of morality. Even Locke had not been able to dispense with rewards and punishments annexed to the moral law. Shaftesbury is most decidedly opposed to this view: morality is its own reward, he thinks; it involves the highest internal satisfaction, and hence needs to be measured by no external standard: it is itself a measure of the worth of all things.

At the same time, the relation of morality to religion is

<sup>1</sup> *The Moralists: a Philosophical Rhapsody*, part ii., § 4, pp. 310-321.

entirely altered. The claims of the latter are based wholly on its agreement with natural morality. If we believe in God, we ascribe actual existence to the predicates 'good' and 'just'; hence we cannot possibly turn about and derive these predicates from the divine will. While Shaftesbury thus earnestly endeavours to free ethics from the restraints of theology, he is far from underrating the ethical value of religion. He takes the Baconian standpoint: true religion, *i.e.*, belief in a deity who is the prototype of moral perfection, promotes morality, for it urges us to imitate this prototype. On the other hand superstition and religious fanaticism are worse enemies than atheism: the latter's attitude is at least neutral; but the former destroy the natural feeling for right and wrong and produce immoral tendencies.<sup>1</sup>

It is here that Shaftesbury's opposition to Locke and the Intellectualists is most apparent. The latter, indeed, had taught the inherent identity of morality and true religion. But they regarded religious commands as co-ordinate with natural morality, and Locke had even allowed that the latter receives its strongest reinforcement through the former. Shaftesbury completed the separation by reversing the relation of dependence; the moral law is not to base its claim to truth on the strength of its religious origin, but the claims of religion are allowable by virtue of their ethical content. Still more important is the position he advances with regard to the *psychological* motives of morality. He abandons entirely the attempt of his predecessors to reduce everything to reflection and a balancing of advantages. The judgment concerning good and bad follows rather than precedes the ideas of good and bad. Since the natural moral law is thus operative in us prior to all reflection, its content must consist in an emotion or a relation between emotions; and since all moral action is concerned either with ourselves

<sup>1</sup> *On Virtue*, book i., part iii.

or our fellow-men, it at once becomes clear that the relation in question is no other than that of harmony between the egoistic and the social affections. The psychological independence of morality and reflection being thus established, the *end* of morality can no longer consist in the prospect of rewards and penalties either in this life or the next: utility can at most be only a by-product of moral action, not its ultimate and chief end. This end consists rather in the *inner blessedness* which is inseparable from a moral life.

Shaftesbury thus maintains the *autonomy of morals* in all respects. Morality is autonomous (1) as regards *religion*, to which it gives laws, instead of receiving them from it; (2) as regards its *motives*, since its source is not in reflection on external consequences or the contemplation of objective relations, but in the human organisation and its implanted affections; (3) as regards its *ends*, since these consist not in the external utility of actions or in the reward allotted to them, but in the inner feeling of blessedness which accompanies moral experience.

Despite the important advance which this theory shows over its predecessors, in its exclusion of non-moral motives and the emphasis which it lays on feeling and emotion as distinct from reflection, it was not wholly satisfactory to contemporary thought. In particular, it became apparent that the theory took insufficient account of the fact of *moral obligation*. The more it insisted on the naturalness of morality as a product of human nature, the more did the concept of *duty* elude its grasp. In the idea of the *beautiful*, which was brought into the closest possible relation with the moral, the thought of duty has no place. And so, while this theory may serve to show how moral emotions can give *satisfaction*, it can never explain the profound dissatisfaction, wholly different from æsthetic dislike, which accompanies the consciousness of guilt. The

philosopher's optimism took account, it is true, of the subjective effects of right conduct ; but it neglected those of *sin*. In spite of their faulty psychology, Locke and the Intellectualists were in closer accord with the demands of practical ethics, for they recognised a law which was either subjectively or objectively obligatory, and whose transgression involved penalties, internal and external. Hence one can readily understand why Shaftesbury's ethics failed to find a response proportioned to its importance in his own period or in that immediately following ; while the Intellectualism against which he marshalled so many weighty arguments nevertheless maintained its sway.

The most potent factor in this result was theology, and we find in consequence that the next tendency to develop in intellectual ethics is that of *theological utilitarianism*. This theory, which has been more or less popular in England from Locke's time to our own, and which found its best statement towards the end of the eighteenth century in *Paley's* Moral Philosophy, considers morality from the standpoint of moderate egoistic utilitarianism.<sup>1</sup> True, it regards the *external* character of the moral act as determined by its being directed rather towards the welfare of one's fellow-men than towards one's own interest in the present life. The *internal* motives of the moral act, however, are on the one hand the divine will, which has prescribed it, and on the other hand desire for the everlasting happiness which is to reward those who obey God's will. The moral law thus becomes a purely external command, which is obligatory less by reason of its own content than because of the manner in which it is given and enforced by God. The fulfilment of duty is primarily

<sup>1</sup> WILLIAM PALEY, *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*. London, 1785. Paley's book also contains many acute observations on practical morality, which does not come within the sphere of our consideration.



an act of prudence, for every wise man must prefer permanent to transitory goods. That the moral law by its own power or through the moral feelings can produce right action, these philosophers for the most part deny. They do not, indeed, like Augustine and his successors in Christian ethics, regard man as naturally bad, but he is naturally selfish, and can be led to a moral life only by such a system of future rewards and punishments as the Gospel depicts.

It is interesting to note that this theological utilitarianism is governed by the same conception of the motives of human action which was being defended at that time by the champion of ethical materialism, *Mandeville*, in his renowned *Fable of the Bees*.<sup>1</sup> Mandeville also assumes that egoism is the only real spring of human actions. He does not think, however, that the divine command or the prospect of future reward gives rise to altruistic actions: such actions are simply a hypocritical pretence; the agent in every case hoping to be more than compensated for his sacrifice by the honour which it will bring him or by material goods. Subtract heaven from theological utilitarianism, and it would not differ very much from the ethics of the *Fable of the Bees*.

A more thorough psychological investigation of the moral motive was undertaken by one of the lay adherents of intellectualistic ethics, *David Hartley*.<sup>2</sup> He has recourse here, as usual, to the principle of *association*, whose psychological importance and applications it is his merit to have recognised. Like Locke and the other utilitarians, he starts with the assumption that self-love is the primary motive of human action; but he then tries to show how this motive may be gradually eliminated; the subjective feelings of pleasure becoming, through association, closely connected with the

<sup>1</sup> *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*: first published in London, 1714, and frequently reprinted with a long commentary by the author. For characteristic extracts see ERDMANN, *op. cit.*, ii. § 284, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Observations on Man*, part ii., chap. iv.

objects to which they relate, so that these objects finally arouse pleasure even apart from any selfish interests. Further, with gradual realisation of the fact that the less the self is involved the less danger there is of disturbing pleasurable feelings by any accompanying disadvantages, the egoistic motives will give place to altruism. Finally, the true essence of morality, Hartley thinks, consists in self-surrender to God and one's fellow-men. Since he requires this self-surrender to be wholly altruistic, Hartley remains free from the egoism of ordinary utilitarianism, while at the same time, in his recognition of the importance of the feelings, he approaches the standpoint of *emotional ethics*.

(d) *David Hume and the Scotch Ethics of Feeling.*

Shaftesbury had already referred the origin of morality to definite emotions, but his treatment of the subject leaves much to be desired. His proof that morality is a balance between the selfish and social affections is hardly adequate, and his too thorough-going analogy between the ethical and the æsthetic is especially dubious.

The first adherent of the Scottish feeling-ethics, *Francis Hutcheson*, sought to moderate and to correct the views of his predecessor on this point.<sup>1</sup> For him, morality cannot consist in a mere harmony of egoistic and social impulses; such a view is contradicted by the unconditional preference which our judgment always gives to *sympathy* above all selfish inclinations. Our approval is won, not by a harmony among different affections, but by the predominance of *purely disinterested love* over all other impulses. Piety and kindness are thus the only virtues; individual perfection has worth only when it resolves itself into these virtues towards God and men. The victory of the altruistic impulses can occur

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophia moralis*, lib. i., cap. i., §§9-13; cap. ii., §§5-12; cap. v.

only with the aid of a peculiar *emotion of approbation*, which associates itself with every benevolent instinct. This emotion springs neither from reflection upon the usefulness of an action, nor from the divine command, nor from a recognition of the truth of certain principles; it is, rather, an innate sense or instinct of a specific kind, differing only in the various degrees of its development. Reason has not, as the intellectual ethics supposes, any primary significance for morals; its influence is secondary, in that it teaches us how to discriminate between what is ethically valuable and what is worthless, and helps us to reach a knowledge of the moral world-order and the power and goodness of the God who preserves that order. The same thought determines the relation of *religion* to the moral life. The chief value of the former Hutcheson considers as lying in the infinite moral attributes which we ascribe to God. He thus allows to religion a far greater moral utility than his predecessors did. Even the external cult he regards as based on the impulse to seek a common worship, and so grounded in the social nature of man, from which all benevolent inclinations arise.<sup>1</sup>

In Hutcheson, thus ascribing a wholly subordinate place to reason in the moral realm, the ethics of feeling culminates. At the same time, it betrays a tendency to one-sidedness which demands correction. This tendency displays itself in two ways: first, in the fact that moral emotion is reduced to benevolence alone, and the moral value of personal virtue is regarded only from this standpoint; second, in that it brings under the head of emotion not merely the moral impulses, but approbation and disapprobation, which always imply a certain use of comparison and judgment. In both these points Hutcheson's theory was supplemented and developed by *Hume*.

Like Shaftesbury, *David Hume* regards morality as a *har-*

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, cap. iv.

*monious union of attributes*, among which we must recognise, besides the social attributes, those of an individual character, which serve to the advantage of their possessor, and others which are useful both to the agent and to his fellow-men.<sup>1</sup> Hume therefore requires a complete development of all these sides of human nature. Since they all depend on natural dispositions, he combats the moralists who see in the *freedom* of certain actions a mark of their moral character. An action to him appears none the less worthy when it follows by an inherent necessity from the natural disposition of the character.<sup>2</sup> Although he would seem here to make the ethical and the natural coincide, he yet thinks it necessary to establish *one* essential difference between the moral feelings and other natural feelings. This difference lies in the fact that our moral emotions do not, like the sensuous, spring from the satisfaction of the moment, but bear a purely objective and disinterested character, since we feel moral pleasure at actions which do not bring the least advantage to us—nay, perhaps do us harm—and admire the moral greatness of persons who lived in a time long past. Hume designates this universal appreciation of moral attributes and actions as *sympathy*. In his earlier work, *On Human Nature*, he gives an explanation of its origin, which recalls Hartley's Theory of Association. Originally, he thinks, our moral feelings like other impressions must have been more strongly aroused by what was close at hand than by what was distant. But through experience we learn to free our feelings, and the judgments based upon them, from this influence; and then, by reason of the effect which great distance produces on the imagination, our admiration tends to increase with the distance in time of the persons or actions we judge.<sup>3</sup> This feeling of sympathy, however, by virtue of which we respond to actions that

<sup>1</sup> *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, sect. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, App. iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Treatise on Human Nature*, book ii., part iii., §§ 7, 8.

do not touch us directly at all, has, according to Hume, an egoistic origin. For we should not sympathise with virtue if we did not in imagination put ourselves in the place of those who receive benefit and advantage from the virtuous act. Hume's sympathy is thus very different from that emotion of benevolence and universal love for humanity on which Hutcheson had based his ethical theory. The latter is selfless, the former springs ultimately from self-love; but they have a common end, for both further the existence of morally disinterested judgments and acts.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his theory Hume is in accord with the ethics of feeling. On the one hand, he broadens Hutcheson's one-sided conception of morality; on the other hand, he tries to reach a profounder psychological explanation for moral approbation and disapprobation. But this explanation has one weakness. Since it recognises no essential difference between moral affections and other natural emotions, it cannot help giving an insufficient account of the origin of the obligatory force of moral laws, and of the great difference in importance which obtains in consequence of these laws between the moral realm and all other departments of life. The hiatus could not have escaped so keen an observer as Hume, and it was very likely for this reason that he borrowed, to complete his theory, certain important elements from the ethics of reflection; and stands in consequence, if we regard his theory as a whole, midway between the feeling-ethics of Shaftesbury and the Scottish school, and the intellectual and utilitarian ethics of Locke.

For while, according to Hume, all the rest of our moral judgments are based on sympathy, and hence, indirectly, on self-love, there is *one* moral attribute which is wholly altruistic from the beginning, and cannot, therefore, be

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise on Human Nature*, book iii., parts i., iii., § 1. *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, sect. v., part ii., and App. II.

derived from sympathetic feeling: namely, *justice*.<sup>1</sup> When we are governed by natural feeling we are partial towards ourselves and unjust to others. / Even sympathy cannot alter matters, for even in sympathy the Ego is the centre to which all emotions and judgments ultimately relate. The case is otherwise with justice. It cannot, therefore, Hume thinks, be reckoned with the natural virtues; it is no original attribute of man, and does not spring from spontaneous feeling, but presupposes reason and deliberation. / It is thus / an artificial creation, though this does not imply that its development is not inevitable and just as necessary as that of other moral attributes. But while the latter proceed from the original nature of man, justice may be called a kind of invention, which can be perfected only by reflection on the relations of man to his fellows, especially with regard to the property which both possess. Thus the existence of justice presupposes not only various empirical conditions, but also reflection concerning these conditions. It can arise solely from the consideration that we get more by restraining our selfish impulses than by giving them loose rein. Hence the sense of justice is a corrective for our natural impulses, though like them it has its ultimate source in self-love. Such a corrective influence, Hume thinks, must have been exerted by reflection upon the natural impulses from the outset, and hence the assumption of a state of nature where the latter ruled alone, whether as an original war of all against all or as a golden age, is to be regarded as pure fiction.<sup>2</sup> Such fictions possess a certain value as intellectual experiments; for instance, the assumption of an egoistic state of nature makes apparent the impossibility that such a state could endure even for the shortest interval; while the hypothesis of a golden age shows us that if every man

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, book iii., part ii. *Inquiry*, sect. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Inquiry*, sect. iii., part i.

were animated by benevolence towards all, or if nature had provided bountifully for all needs, the virtue of justice would be superfluous.

In this derivation of justice from the tempering influence of reflection upon the emotions, Hume is apparently guided by his conception of the origin of *positive law*. Since, in common with his age, he held law to be, from its very foundation, an arbitrary and deliberate creation, it was natural that he should regard that ethical attribute upon which the legal structure depends, justice, as a kind of invention. And inasmuch as for his system of morals justice occupies the ruling place among the virtues, the element of reflection practically obtains preponderance over the ethics of feeling, from which he started out.

Towards *religion*, also, Hume's attitude is more sceptical than that of Hutcheson. His view, so far as it appears in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, seems to be in essentials the Baconian: a superstitious religion is worse than none. He goes even further: a pure religion always and necessarily contains a pure system of morals, but the latter is no better for forming part of a religious system.<sup>1</sup> The result is that religion in and for itself is valueless for morality. It may involve dangers, but no advantages that could not be obtained in other ways.

On these points Hume is as extreme as any of the English freethinkers of the eighteenth century; but he is distinguished among them by the deeper and broader foundation on which he seeks to base his ethics. Nevertheless, it is his uncompromising assumption of the standpoint of reflection against religion that occasions the inconsistencies of his system. His attempt to derive the facts of the moral life from a harmonious co-operation of various moral affections, is thwarted by the improbability that so disinterested an

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, part xii.

emotion as justice could spring from the soil of man's selfish instincts. To get out of the difficulty he supplements his emotional theory by introducing rational reflection, which proceeds from considerations essentially egoistic. For Hume not only narrows the conception of justice by restricting it to property relations, but interprets property in a purely egoistic sense. Nothing but private property has a right to the name; and in proof Hume adduces the supposition that a stream flowing through a certain state does not belong to the state, but that strictly speaking every citizen is entitled to a share. No man can see beyond the horizon of his age. It is just such details as this that show to what extent Hume's ethical vision was limited by the individualistic tendency of thought in the eighteenth century, a tendency which influences more or less all the ethical systems of the time. Aside from this, however, the unmistakable inconsistency in Hume's moral philosophy required correction. And as a matter of fact Hume's successor, *Adam Smith*, sought to avoid this lack of harmony by returning to the views of Hutcheson, which he extended, however, by connecting them with the investigations of Hume.

*Adam Smith* is far better known in the history of thought by his work on economics, *The Wealth of Nations*, than by his *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. One would hardly suspect from the former work the standpoint which the writer assumes in the latter. As a political economist, Smith makes the chief motive of human action to consist in prudent calculation, guided by egoistic interests; as a moral philosopher, he bases his whole theory on the feelings, and among the feelings he makes altruism supreme. He is, however, impartial enough to allow—in the review of various ethical systems with which he concludes his work—a certain degree of truth to every theory, even to that which



derives morality from reflection and that which deduces it from self-love.<sup>1</sup> The ethics of reflection especially is right, he argues, in so far as every *judgment* on moral actions is actually a matter of reflection; but it involves the error of taking a judgment after the fact for the cause of the fact. Further, self-love is indeed a factor in moral affairs, but not the only one; consciousness manifests itself where moral judgments are in question rather in the form of sympathetic feeling. This last Smith conceives in a broader and deeper sense than did his predecessor. Hume regarded only the *objective* side of sympathy.<sup>2</sup> According to him we feel sympathy with moral actions, even when they do not affect ourselves, by putting ourselves in the place of those who are benefited. Thus in spite of its emotional basis the utilitarian tendency is present in Hume's theory from the outset. Smith completes the conception by adding the *subjective* aspect. We feel sympathy with moral action not only because we think ourselves into the place of the person affected, but because we enter into the spirit of the agent. The satisfaction which the latter feels in his own deed we feel also, and we obtain in this way a general standard of morality which is the creation of our immediate consciousness. This change in the conception of sympathy, trivial as it may appear at first sight, had a very wide influence upon the way in which moral facts were regarded. While Hume made the final judgment on the merit of an act rest on its external effect, which is the only possible measure of the advantage it secures for others, for Smith the crucial point is the *disposition*. For in order that we shall be moved to sympathy with another's act, we must be convinced that it springs from a moral disposition. The

<sup>1</sup> *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, first published in 1759. Part vi., § 8. Cf. also JOH. SCHUBERT, *Adam Smith's Moralphilosophie*. *Philos. Studien*, vi., p. 552 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, part ii., §§ 2 ff.

moral character of an act is now determined not by its external consequences, but by the *motives* which give rise to it. Hence, while the *maxims of utility* do not lose all significance, they play a subordinate part. Though in themselves they have nothing to do with the moral disposition, they may strengthen its motives; and when judgment is passed upon it, they may even serve to heighten the favourable impression.

Besides dwelling on the subjective aspect of sympathy, Smith does not neglect its objective side; he only seeks to give it a more accurate psychological definition. Here we do not put ourselves into the place of the agent, but into that of the person affected by the action: thus our feeling must be simply a copy of that produced in the said person's mind by the act. But the deeds of others produce in us an emotion of gratitude when we feel ourselves benefited by them, and an impulse of revenge when we feel ourselves injured. Objective sympathy, then, may be described as a *retributive impulse*, if we extend the term to cover both gratitude and revenge. This profounder conception of sympathy marks another advance beyond Hume. The latter had failed to derive one of the most important ethical motives, *justice*, from the natural moral feelings, and had ascribed it to reflection. Smith shows that the emotional root of justice lies in the retributive impulse. Justice is only this impulse universalised, and consequently is on a common basis with the so-called natural virtues. Deliberation and insight are allowed full scope in the formation of objective law, but the latter is not regarded as wholly the arbitrary creation which Hume, following Locke, had made it. Smith holds that only on the supposition that justice too takes its rise in feeling can we explain the difference in importance which obtains between the moral and those other departments of human interest which are

so often confused with it, *e.g.*, the useful, the suitable, the rational.<sup>1</sup> Hume had given no explanation for the distinction, but had identified morality with the natural as regards its emotional origin, and with the prudent and useful as regards its completion by means of justice. Smith observes that even the retributive sentiments, if they were limited like sensuous emotion and other feelings to the individual, could never have reached their dominant position. Their distinguishing mark lies in the possibility of their sympathetic transference to other persons, a transference of which everyone is conscious. Every agent knows that his act will produce retributive sentiments not only in the person affected, but, through objective sympathy, in everyone else; and that these feelings, again, by reason of subjective sympathy, relate less to the effect of his act than to its motive. The consciousness of this transference of the retributive feelings is conscience, which thus, like the significance of morality dependent upon it, has its source in society.<sup>2</sup> Unlike Hume, Smith allows great ethical importance to *religion*, for the reason that it is the chief means of emphasising the universal requirements of morals and of strengthening the natural sense of duty. Even the more imperfect heathen religions do not lack this moral worth, for in spite of their lower ideas of the gods, they regard them as the executives of the moral law.<sup>3</sup>

With Adam Smith the development of the earlier English ethics closes and at the same time culminates. The psychological analysis of morals which Hume began, Smith completes with a command of the subject wonderful considering the state of psychology in his age; while at the same time he frees it from the heterogeneous elements of the intellectual ethics, which Hume had failed to master. This

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 114 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, part iii., pp. 177 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, chap. iii., pp. 218 ff.

psychological tendency constitutes alike his strength and weakness. Careful as is his analysis of moral motives, and helpful as his discovery of the subjective feeling of sympathy is to him in this connection, the introduction of the latter occasions a defect which was less noticeable in Hume's theory on account of his attempted derivation of justice from reflection. To say that we sympathise with the disposition to virtuous action because we feel satisfaction at our own virtuous disposition, gives no account of the ultimate basis of this satisfaction itself. Appeal to an immediate feeling only pushes the question one step back, for it may now be asked what the cause of this feeling is. When Smith says that its cause is love for what is honourable and noble, the desire for a grand and dignified character, he is arguing in a circle; for it remains to be shown wherein our ideas of the honourable, noble, etc., consist, and under what external and internal conditions they are called forth. Thus even on the psychological side Smith has not reached the heart of the matter. Moreover, the psychological side is not the only side. Despite the fruitfulness of Smith's labours to explain the difference between moral and other judgments, he did not succeed in hitting upon the chief ground for this difference, namely, the *normative* character of morals.

While the method of psychological investigation thus proved itself, in the theories of its most distinguished adherents, Hartley, Hume and Smith, incapable of furnishing a foundation for ethics, there now appears by way of supplement another tendency which rests the whole weight of its theory upon the normative character of ethics, and in order to explain this character has recourse to a *metaphysical* foundation. But before we follow its development, which is throughout in opposition to the empirical moral philosophy of England, an offshoot of the latter remains to be considered.

(e) *The Ethics of French Materialism.*

Although the attitude of French philosophy at this time was determined in essentials by the political and social conditions of the century before the Revolution, as well as by national metaphysical traditions, *e.g.*, the materialistic atomism of Gassendi and the natural philosophy of Descartes, its ethics was closely connected with that of the English moral philosophers, especially Locke and his utilitarian successors. The chief representative of the ethics of the French Enlightenment is *Helvetius*.<sup>1</sup> His views, little altered, may be found in other adherents of the same tendency. Among the followers of Locke it is Mandeville with whom he stands in closest relation. But he is distinguished from Mandeville by a practical idealism, which is throughout peculiar both to French materialism and to its opponents. These philosophers felt themselves to be the harbingers of a new epoch. Their eloquence was directed not only against the burden of perverted social institutions, but also against the yoke of prejudice and superstition under which, in their own opinion, humanity was languishing. They sketched the ideal picture of a rule of reason, under which everyone would be animated only by the noblest motives towards his fellow-men, and which would substitute for the existing injustice and inequality, universal equality and fraternity; for constraint and social misery, universal liberty and happiness.

But the means which were to bring it to pass are in curious contrast to this ideal state of things. All self-sacrifice for others and all social virtues can, it is held, be directly derived from self-love. Hence the process of enlightening men as to their own advantage would seem

<sup>1</sup> *De l'esprit*, Paris, 1758. *De l'homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation*. Oeuvres posth. Londres, 1773.

to be the best method of producing the state of universal happiness. Helvetius is far from denying that man may reach the point of preferring the general welfare to his personal interest; indeed, he holds it to be essential to his ideal state of society that as many persons as possible shall be capable of disinterested action. But he thinks that such a disposition must be derived from original egoism by the complex influences of life, especially by education, legislation and personal experience. It is true that he gave no psychological explanation of the possibility of this development; in this respect his theory is faultier than that of Mandeville, who mentions vanity and ambition as the motives of all unselfish action, thus reducing such action to a mere pretence. Helvetius ascribes too much positive worth to altruistic actions to be a follower of Mandeville in this respect. His practical idealism clashes with his theoretical hedonism and egoism.

As at this point, so throughout in the psychological groundwork of his theory he is far inferior to his English predecessors. The demand that all men shall be regarded as equal, which these writers included in their ideal of the future, was transformed by most of them, including Helvetius, into the fiction of an original state of absolute equality,—a complete likeness of disposition and original character. The reverse side of this belief was formed by the assumption that education, instruction and legislation exert an all-powerful influence upon humanity. As the inclination to refer all social wrongs to the bad state of existing arrangements became stronger, there was an increased tendency to expect that future salvation would result from the reform of these arrangements. In Helvetius, as in Holbach's *System of Nature*, we find it definitely assumed that wise lawgivers would be able so to educate and guide the natural selfishness of man that he would devote himself

to the salvation of his fellows, and would co-operate to bring about universal happiness. How these wise legislators were to set to work,—how, indeed, they could be produced under existing conditions, and on what grounds they were to subdue their natural egoism in behalf of the community,—are points left unexplained.

We see, then, that however important the ethics of the French Enlightenment may be as a part of the history of thought, it did nothing for the solution of ethical problems; and the same thing must be said of the opponents which it found in contemporary French literature. The views of Rousseau, for instance, though he combated with forcible eloquence the egoistic and irreligious attitude of materialistic ethics, are like those of his adversaries, merely an echo of the English moral philosophy which preceded them. As his opponents adopt in an exaggerated and partial form the intellectual ethics of the English, so Rousseau adopts the ethics of sentiment, in accordance with which he regards morality not as arising from selfish calculation, but as the natural product of feeling yet unspoiled by culture. Of a psychological analysis of this feeling, which is sometimes identified with conscience, sometimes with reason, Rousseau says nothing. But the conflict between the corresponding English tendencies is here repeated and intensified; for while Helvetius and his followers, believing that the best way to bring about a state of happiness is to inform men concerning their true interest, require for this purpose the dissemination of an enlightened philosophy, Rousseau casts aside all culture and science as vain, and demands a return to the original and ideal state of nature. However, materialism too extols the condition of affairs which it expects to result from the new culture as a kind of 'return to nature'; and so the two tendencies are more closely akin than they seem on the surface to be. Both unite, as

a matter of fact, the revolutionary spirit with that rigid individualism which makes Rousseau the eloquent champion of the social contract of all with all and of an absolute popular sovereignty deduced from equality of rights.

## 2. THE METAPHYSICAL ETHICS OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES.

### (a) *Descartes and Cartesianism.*

While English ethics, less influenced by the philosophical systems which were developing contemporaneously in France, England and Germany, went its own way, and in its prevailing tendencies was occupied with giving an empirical account of the general conditions of moral life, the main stream of continental philosophy took another course. Externally, the difference appears in the fact that ethics on the Continent is regarded less as an independent subject, but is throughout the handmaid of metaphysics. In this respect, as in others, metaphysics appears as the heir of theology. The bond between the two is internally strengthened not only by the fact that theology and metaphysics are occupied with the same transcendental problems, but also in many instances for the reason that the metaphysics of that time was influenced by preceding theological speculation in general and by certain of its lines of thought in particular.

This twofold aspect is especially evident in the thinker who begins the development of modern metaphysics,—in *Descartes*. He is far more indebted to scholastic speculation than his own writings show. To the elements which he derived from this source, however, he added the mechanical view of the world which was current at the time, and which in his theory of the emotions he brings over into psychology. Then, too, his doctrine of the will and its relation to emotion is important for the further development of ethics. In his



conception of the will he is a disciple of nominalism. He is an indeterminist and intellectualist. The divine will, like the will of man, is free. The requirements of morals are divine commands, and it is man's privilege to follow them or not. But clear willing and clear thinking are identical. If, then, man were a purely spiritual being, any deviation from clear knowledge, under which the moral law may be classed, would be impossible. But the human soul is united with the body. Now Descartes differs from the views of Christian Platonism, in that he does not regard this union as unnatural, imposed upon man as an evil or as a punishment for previous error. On the contrary, he makes it natural and ordained in God's original plan of the world. But a trace of the old idea persists in his doctrine that this union with the physical is responsible for sin. Only it is not matter itself which is immediately regarded as evil ; what Descartes tries to do is to explain the origin of divergence from the good *psychologically*, by a reference to the interaction of mind and body. The middle term which helps him out here is found in the *emotions*. They are states at once of body and of soul, based on the interaction of the two. They do not proceed from the soul, as the older philosophers thought : they are originally affections of the body which are propagated to the soul through the animal spirits. Hence the soul's attitude towards them is passive, for which reason they are called *passions* (*passions de l'âme*). Clear knowledge is disturbed by them, so that we desire that which is not desirable.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Descartes obtains a twofold interpretation, intellectual and emotional, for the correlated ideas of the moral and the immoral. On the one hand the moral coincides with clear knowledge ; on the other with the supremacy of will over the emotions : similarly the immoral is identical with

<sup>1</sup> *Les passions de l'âme*, especially Parts i. and ii. Cf. also *Discourse on Method*, iii., iv.

obscure knowledge and with the slavery of will to the emotions. The two views are harmonised by the fact that all disturbance of knowledge comes from the emotions. Now since the origin of the emotions lies in the natural conjunction of soul and body, the supremacy of the will cannot be brought about by a complete disappearance of the emotions, but only by the predominance of those emotions which are by their very nature *incapable* of enslaving the will. There is *one* such emotion: it is that of *purely intellectual interest*; the feeling of *wonder*. This emotion, since it directs the will towards knowledge, furthers the supremacy of will over the other and less noble passions. While these latter endanger morality by disturbing the faculties of knowledge and will, the feeling of wonder, in so far as it succeeds in supplanting the others, is the chief aid to morality.

The relation which Descartes supposes to exist between wonder and the other emotions is an early indication of his attempt to give a more logical formulation to the emotional side of his theory. In this attempt he was never successful; apparently because his indeterminism would not allow him to regard the will otherwise than as the supreme court of appeal. Consequently the development of *Cartesian* ethics proceeded in *two* main directions. On the one hand the Cartesian theory was given a better psychological foundation by a complete theory of emotion; while on the other hand the standpoint of indeterminism was abandoned.

*Arnold Geulinx* had already made a considerable advance towards determinism in his occasionalistic theory of the relation between body and soul.<sup>1</sup> If ideas are produced in our mind by God on the occasion of certain processes in our body, and if the movements of our body are caused by God

<sup>1</sup> *Gnothi Seauton sive Ethica*, Amstelod. 1709. Extracts in ERDMANN, vol. ii., §§ 267, 268.

on the occasion of the corresponding ideas in our mind, then we are, body and soul, nothing but instruments in God's hand. Unconditional free will belongs only to God, not to man, who, as soon as he understands his true nature, surrenders his will to God's. Even here the will in itself is free, but its complete abrogation is required as a duty, and this suppression takes place under the forms both of knowledge and of emotion. In the one case it is the result of true insight into our own nature and its relation to the divine being; in the other case it is a product of the noblest of emotions, *humility*, which Geulinx lauds as the virtue of virtues.

*Malebranche* goes a step further in the same direction.<sup>1</sup> Extending the principle of occasionalism, he refers every event in nature to the direct operation of the divine will. Consequently, not only does unconditioned human freedom vanish, but important limitations are imposed on the divine will itself. The more we make God's voluntary operation coincide with the order of nature, the more we necessitate it. According to the theological formula which expressed this view, God might have left the world uncreated, but having decided to create it, no other world-order than the present was possible. But this order is only a manifestation of the divine being, and hence must be as truly and absolutely good as the divine essence itself, which is mirrored in the natural order of things, and especially in the clearest idea which we possess of this natural order, namely, the idea of *space*.

Even the existence of evil does not trouble Malebranche. God included sin in the world-order, because He possessed the means of compensating for it; and this means, the Incarnation of Christ, exceeded in value the evil on whose account it was necessary. In this doctrine, as elsewhere, we find the

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens sur la métaphysique et sur la religion*. Oeuvres par JULES SIMON, t. i. *De la recherche de la vérité*, do, t. iii. and iv. *Traité de morale*, Paris, 1707. Extracts are given by BOUILLIER, *Histoire de la philos. Cartésienne*, t. ii., pp. 68-75.

thought of earlier Christian ethics revived. But the rationalism of the age stood in the way of a wholly mystical conception of sin. Besides deriving it from the fall of man, the Cartesian theory regarded sin as the effect of obscured knowledge, which is necessarily involved in the finite nature of man. God has implanted in us an irresistible impulse towards Himself, the perfect good; but our faulty knowledge makes us strive after lesser goods. Sin, therefore, is rather a negative than a positive evil; a weakness, whose cure lies partly in clear knowledge, partly in strength of will. Malebranche thus draws a distinction between understanding and will, which were identical for Descartes. The function of the understanding is to know God; that of the will is to love Him. Since individual things ought to be regarded simply as aids to the knowledge of God, our feeling towards them and towards our fellow-men should not be strictly love, but rather benevolence and respect, for like ourselves they are creatures of God. Cartesian indeterminism is thus attacked both in its divine and in its human aspect; and Descartes' attempt to treat morality as the product at once of knowledge and of the development of the emotions is here completed, knowledge and emotion being no longer regarded as opposing forces, but as different aspects of the same process. Understanding makes possible the *knowledge* of God, will is exercised in *loving* God, but the two are inseparably united, for we can neither know God without loving Him, nor love Him without knowing Him.

Thus we find that both in metaphysics and in ethics Malebranche is almost a pantheist. There is just one thing that restrains him from the final step: he cannot give up the principles which the Catholic Church imposes on him. He carries forward that process of rationalisation in Christian ethics which Descartes began, and which, like the attempt to restore an older theology, finds its fulfilment in *Spinoza*.

It is Spinoza who is the first to create a wholly metaphysical ethics, free from all trace of its theological origin. Spinoza thus completes for continental ethics the separation between morality and religion which English empiricism, in spite of many relapses, had effected under the leadership of Bacon.

(b) *Spinoza.*

*Spinoza's* ethics is throughout based on his metaphysics. In the first part of his principal work the metaphysical nature of his problem, with its definition of substance and the dialectical elaboration of this fundamental concept of his philosophy, is so much in evidence that the title 'Ethics' strikes the reader as odd. It is only towards the end of the work that we find the title to have been chosen intentionally, in order to indicate that it is the problems of ethics upon which the author lays most stress. His metaphysics and epistemology are only preparatory and auxiliary to the ethical theory which is to crown the edifice of his system.<sup>1</sup> In still another way, unintended by the author, its title is significant of the tendency of the book. Not only is a theory of ethics the end and aim of his work, but the ethical atmosphere which pervades it is the real source of its metaphysics. Next to the Platonic philosophy there is perhaps no system which bears such marked traces of having originated in ethical needs as does Spinoza's. Here, as in Platonism, the problems of metaphysics are identical with those of religion. The conception of Deity is the keystone of both systems: philosophy as Plato and Spinoza understand it, is rationalised religion. For the former it is the idea of the Good which takes the place of the religious notion of God: for the latter it is the concept of substance. But while Plato never quite succeeded in assimilating

<sup>1</sup> Cf. here the Introduction to the tractate *De Intellectus Emendatione*. Elwes' trans., vol. ii., p. 6.

dialectically the mythical elements of the religious consciousness, Spinoza's philosophy is completely rationalised religion. Not a single touch of the fantastic is left. The only remaining trace of religion is found in Spinoza's identification of the concept of substance with that of Deity. But this rationalised religion is of course fundamentally different from the enlightened deism of Locke and his school. While the latter deliberately disregarded the mystical depths of religious thought, and made the essence of religious revelation to consist in an intellectualistic and utilitarian ethics of the most superficial character, it is just this mystical content of the concept of God and of religious feeling that Spinoza undertakes to transform into rational knowledge.

The immediate successors of Descartes had already shown a tendency to oppose the nominalism and indeterminism which largely governed his philosophy; and Spinoza flatly contradicts all such doctrines: for him the principle of inner necessity is everywhere supreme. Not only is God Himself, as an infinite self-existent Being, necessary; but all that is in Him, His attributes and modes, that which determines the course of individual things, fulfils itself under the same necessity.<sup>1</sup> There is no room here for free-will: every human action, too, is involved with the substantial world-ground as a necessary modification of its being.<sup>2</sup> In consequence of this coherence with the ground of all things, we can never speak of what ought to be, but only of what is. Moral and immoral are relative terms, which have a meaning only so long as we confine them to the consideration of our emotions and the relation of emotion to knowledge, but whose distinction wholly vanishes in relation to the totality of being. God, the Absolute, is neither good nor bad, for all these finite and relative determinations are in Him reduced to unity. If, then, morality with its gradations is relegated

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, Pars i.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, Pars v., Schol. 11-32.

wholly to the realm of the finite, of limited knowledge, then we must give up the nominalistic idea that it is derived from a direct command of God. If substance itself is not affected by this relative distinction of good and bad, then the ground of the difference must be sought in the limitations of finite being, the modes of substance. Not *natura naturans*, in which all antitheses and differences of finite thought disappear, but *natura naturata*, the infinite series of the substantial world-ground's individual manifestations, is the sphere of moral as of all other determinations of value.

Here, too, in the realm of particular effects and events, of *natura naturata*, is the sphere of human freedom and of its opposite, spiritual slavery. For man, like every other individual thing, is determined within the chain of particular causes and effects, partly by the attributes of his own nature, as they originate from his connection with infinite substance, partly by other and external things. As regards the former, he is *active*; as regards the latter, *passive*. So long as he follows the inner determinations of his own being, he is *free*; when he is determined by external grounds, he is *not* free. Absence of freedom is always caused by obscure, inadequate knowledge; for as soon as we get a clear conception of our own being, we cannot be determined otherwise than by this clear knowledge. When we form inadequate ideas we are ruled by passive emotions, by such states of our body and soul as have their source not in ourselves but in external objects. Morality thus assumes a twofold aspect for Spinoza: on the one hand, it is identical with adequate knowledge; on the other hand, with active emotion. These two aspects, however, necessarily coincide. Passive emotion ceases to be passive as soon as its nature is clearly recognised. For the man who has reached the stage of clear knowledge there is thus no more passive suffering or pain. He knows that he

himself is one with the Infinite Being; that the affections of his body and soul are only modifications of this Infinite Being, and that the love of earthly things is but a modification of the highest form of love,—love of God. Knowledge of God, as the highest form of knowing, is thus necessarily involved in the highest and most blessed of all emotions, the intellectual love of God, which, figuratively speaking, is a part of the infinite love with which God loves Himself. There is nothing in nature which is contrary to this love or can overcome it; for it follows from the proper nature of the soul, and is, therefore, that active emotion which is directly connected with the soul's self-knowledge. Virtuous action is action under the guidance of reason. Virtue, in this sense, needs no reward; it is itself its own reward, because it involves the highest form of self-satisfaction, based on reason, and is identical with the love of God in which all blessedness consists. Further, virtue is not the result of the control of sensuous impulses; it is rather the only source of the power to control our impulses.<sup>1</sup>

Since, for Spinoza, self-knowledge and knowledge of God are thus identical, while virtue and happiness rest on knowledge of God, the significance of the active and social virtues is obscured. True, the good which the virtuous man desires for himself he wishes for other men also. Still, the individual acts for himself and his own advantage alone, and succumbs to the passive emotions if he allows himself to be determined in his action by the welfare of others. To be virtuous, to follow the guidance of reason, and to strive for one's own interest, are all synonymous for Spinoza; but, of course, he interprets the term 'interest,' not in the sense of popular utilitarianism as the effort for external advantages, an effort which springs merely from inadequate knowledge and favours the passive emotions; but as the maintenance

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, iv., Defin. Prop. 1. *Ethica*, v., Prop. 1, Schol. 36-42.



of one's own being in its connection with Infinite Being, conceived through adequate knowledge. Hence the virtuous man is cheerful and self-satisfied, friendly and frank towards his fellow-men, but of sympathy he knows nothing, for it is a passive emotion, and as such, bad. The assistance which sympathy prompts us to render to others, the virtuous man gives at the instance of reason.<sup>1</sup>

Spinoza's decided emphasis upon the individual aspect of the concept of virtue, as well as his inclination towards the contemplative life, shown by the importance which he ascribes to knowledge of self and of God, and to the love of God therewith involved, prove him a true successor of the Christian ascetics. His absorption in the knowledge and love of God bears no slight resemblance to the views of those Christian moralists who saw in religious contemplation the only healing for a wounded soul. Of course, however, the rationalistic Spinoza does not refer this healing to a future life, but to the immediate satisfaction arising from virtue; though his attitude towards immortality is not at all one of denial, since he ascribes an eternal existence to everything which the soul knows under the form of eternity, and hence to the soul itself, in so far as it has a clear and adequate idea of itself. For every adequate idea is an inalienable part of the eternal Being.<sup>2</sup>

While in all these respects his ethics must be termed deeply religious, even verging towards the mystical aspect of Christian faith, its religious character was far from apparent to Spinoza's contemporaries. His identification of the concept of substance with God, and of God with Nature, they regarded as a blasphemy, thinly veiling atheism; and his complete disregard of the dogmas of existing religions seemed a confirmation of their opinion. Moreover, even apart from this prejudice, based to a certain extent on a

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, iv., Schol. 40-50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, v., Schol. 24-36.

delusive appearance, Spinoza's ethical tendency was out of accord with the ruling spirit of the time. His ethics was at bottom too religious for the age. In its exclusive turning towards God it neglected what was called, despite the absence of any possible claim to resemble Christian ethics, especially in its earlier forms, 'practical Christianity.' A Jewish thinker whose own community had cast him off and who could not make up his mind to enter any other, Spinoza's strong leaning towards contemplation is the natural result of his solitary life. Thus, both in character and in the external circumstances of his life, he forms the strongest possible contrast to the man whose efforts were directed towards an ethical theory differing on all the above points from the supposed atheism of Spinoza.

(c) *Leibniz.*

*Leibniz*, influenced by every current of the public life and scientific activity of his time, taking a manifold and active part in both, made no secret of the fact that his task was to adapt his system, as far as possible, to all reasonable demands. In particular, he wished to reconcile philosophy and theology; and the summit of his ambition would have been reached could he have succeeded, as his over-bold desires encouraged him to hope, in re-uniting in his own philosophy the warring Christian churches and creeds. These efforts at compromise must not be overlooked in estimating his philosophy. They stamp him, with all his liberality, as an eclectic, and one who shares with all eclectics the fault of frequently combining contradictory elements. But Leibniz has *one* thing in common with Spinoza: his ethics is wholly based on his metaphysics, and this latter in turn is ultimately deduced from ethical postulates.

It is well known that the metaphysical opposition between the two finds expression in their radically different conceptions of substance. Spinoza conceives it as a *pantheist*, Leibniz

as an *individualist*. For the former, substance is the absolute unity and infinity of all that exists ; for the latter, substance is the absolutely independent individual existence ; and it is the infinity of monads in their continuous gradations from the lowest to the highest perfection which makes up the sum total of existing things.<sup>1</sup> Little as the fact appears in the philosophical groundwork of the theories, this difference is undoubtedly due to ethical and religious motives. Spinoza's religious feeling is wholly one of submission to God ; in this feeling every thought of the independence of the individual vanishes. His conception of God is so filled with the idea of absolute infinity, that he makes no effort to ascribe to substance predicates, such as *personality*, which are borrowed from the realm of finite and limited knowledge. As the opposition of good and bad disappears in God, so the idea of personality, which, since it deludes us with the notion of an independence of the individual that has no basis in fact, comes under the head of inadequate knowledge, is wholly inapplicable to the divine Being. In the opinion of Leibniz, on the other hand, with his individualistic doctrine of substance, we not only may but must ascribe to God the character of *personality*, along with all the further predicates which religion allows Him. He is the Creator and Governor of the world ; He is, especially, the Creator and Preserver of the moral world-order. From this general standpoint it was not hard for the philosopher to maintain a friendly attitude, even towards particular church dogmas.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this difference in their fundamental metaphysical views, the two philosophers agree in certain presuppositions of their ethical systems: presuppositions to which metaphysical ethics as such is strongly inclined. The first of these is *determinism*. For Leibniz, too, all thoughts and

<sup>1</sup> LEIBNIZ, *Opera philos.*, ed. Erdmann, pp. 376, 705, 714. Duncan's tr., pp. 218-19, 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. ph.*, ed. Erdmann, pp. 411, 463, 532 seq., 708, 716. Duncan's tr., pp. 194 ff., 223 ff., 213-14.

acts of the individual being proceed necessarily from its original nature; and he denies, with especial reference to the moral law, that God could have produced any other world-order than the one which actually exists.<sup>1</sup> True, he seeks by a very evident effort to adapt himself to religious ideas and moderate this determinism, making a distinction between metaphysical and moral necessity, and declaring the creation of a different world to have been metaphysically but not morally possible, since the existing world must necessarily, by reason of the assumed infinite perfection of God, be the best. But this distinction between metaphysical and moral necessity is evidently artificial and forced, for the very spirit of the Leibnizian teleology itself requires that what is morally necessary should coincide with what is metaphysically necessary. A second point of agreement with Spinoza, and one which results from the ultimate affinity among all rationalistic systems, is found in Leibniz' *Intellectualism*. Leibniz, too, makes moral action and rational action identical; immorality is a defect, an error, the product of confused ideas. This similarity of view is connected with the fact that in Leibniz' epistemology the opposition between clear and confused representations corresponds fully to that between adequate and inadequate knowledge in Spinoza's theory. And as Spinoza supplements knowledge by emotion, and the highest knowledge by the most perfect emotion—the intellectual love of God—so Leibniz supplements representation by *effort*, and clear representation by a clearly conscious effort, which involves happiness and consists in love to God and our fellow-creatures.<sup>2</sup>

It is of course quite evident, however, from the different ways in which, as we have just remarked, the two philo-

<sup>1</sup> *Théodicée, Op. ph.*, ed. Erdmann, pp. 513 seq. *Nouv. ess.*, liv. ii., chap. xxi., *ibid.* p. 249. Duncan's tr., pp. 335 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Nouv. ess.*, liv. ii., chap. xxi., p. 263. Duncan's tr., p. 337. *Princ. de la nature et de la grâce, op. cit.*, p. 717. Duncan's tr., p. 215-6.

sophers conceive the moral emotion of love, that important differences in ethical attitude lie hidden beneath their similarity in metaphysical views. With Spinoza, as with his contemporary theological counterpart, Malebranche, love to one's fellow-men is an inferior emotion; his ethics remains egoistic, ennobled and spiritualised egoism though it is; the *amor intellectualis Dei*, and the blessedness which the individual thereby creates for himself, constitute at once the highest virtue and its supreme reward. Leibniz sets beside the love of God, as nearly equal in worth, love to one's fellow-men. Since every individual being is both a mirror of the universe and an ectype of God, love to one's fellow-men is always love to God; and since we can exercise this love only towards our fellow-men, inasmuch as we are not in a position to show beneficence towards God, love to one's fellow-men becomes for Leibniz the chief source of practical morality.<sup>1</sup> His ethics is thus not egoistic, but *altruistic*. Virtue and blessedness are not merely individual goods, they are attainable only in harmonious social life. Here, too, his ethics reflects his metaphysic, which is based on the idea of harmony in the world. In like manner, it is precisely this metaphysical system of his, full of the thought of the individual's independence, which keeps him from a too partial preference for the altruistic virtues, love and benevolence towards others. He estimates the purely personal excellences no less highly; indeed, they occupy the first rank in so far as they condition the development of the other virtues. For all virtue rests on clear knowledge, and this is in the first instance an individual attribute, involving usefulness to others merely as its result. Thus for Leibniz, virtue and perfection are in general identical. Moral culture is spiritual perfection in every respect.

<sup>1</sup> *De vita beata*, *op. cit.*, p. 72. *Nowv. ess.*, liv. ii., chap. xx., p. 246. Duncan's tr., pp. 330-31. *Defin. Ethic.*, *op. cit.*, p. 670, etc. Duncan's tr., p. 127.

If the monad theory and pre-established harmony are incompatible with a conception of virtue which is purely individual and, in a certain sense, egoistic, they are none the less inconsistent with another side of the Spinozistic theory, the view, namely, that the antithesis between moral and immoral possesses only a relative significance, that it holds good only for finite phenomena, and disappears in the infinitude of substance. The idea of harmony is so intimately connected with the thought of the moral world-order that it leads almost necessarily to the placing of morality itself, merely raised, like all representations, to a higher power, in the original substance, the supreme monad. Leibniz thus explicitly opposes the supposition, which he considers *irreligious*, to the effect that the good is not of divine creation. But this position of his seems to lead to the natural conclusion that *evil* too is due to the divine will. Leibniz makes the greatest efforts to avoid such an assumption. He seeks to explain by his doctrine of the best world the actual existence of evil in the world. That the actual world is the best of all possible worlds he concludes from the infinite goodness and perfection of God. If, notwithstanding, evil exists in it, this is a proof that a world without evil was impossible; and he tries to make his explanation more plausible by the double expedient of showing that the good can only be appreciated by contrast with the bad, and pointing out that evil is not seldom a means to the attainment of good,—thoughts which had frequently served the same purpose in scholastic philosophy. He is arguing more in the spirit of his own philosophical methods when he regards evil as a defect, and defect as a necessary stage of all development. Even in the moral realm perfection can only be reached by a gradual evolution from what is imperfect.<sup>1</sup> Still more artificial are Leibniz' endeavours to acquit God of a direct production of evil. Such a supposition

<sup>1</sup> *Theodice*, part ii., pp. 539 ff.

is impossible. God has merely allowed evil as necessary ; He is its *causa deficiens*, not *efficiens*,—another artifice from the scholastic apparatus, and one which only serves to render more evident the impossibility of making God responsible for morality without at the same time making him the originator of sin.<sup>1</sup> Leibniz' other arguments are all in a like spirit. They are for the most part scholastic in character, and are efforts at reconciliation under a new form with the doctrines of the Church ; for instance, his distinction between what is above reason and what is contrary to reason as an explanation of miracle, and his manifold other attempts to harmonise particular Christian dogmas with his philosophy.

Far more important is a third point of difference between Leibniz and Spinoza : one where the former's ethics is as superior to the latter's as it is inferior in its efforts to ascribe to the Absolute moral attributes derived from human experience. This last point is also closely connected with Leibniz' metaphysic. While Spinoza's substance-doctrine ignores the idea of *development*, it is this very thought that fills the *Monadology*. The totality of the universe is formed by a series of developments which, extending from the lowest to the highest monads, passes through all grades of clearness of representations. The individual soul is no less subject to the law of gradual perfection. Its representations, obscure at the outset, rise with the help of experience into greater and greater clearness. At the same time nothing reaches the soul which was not there from the beginning. For even experience is a self-development, though a self-development which, by reason of the law of continuity in all being, is related to everything which takes place in other monads. From this standpoint Leibniz opposes Locke's attempted demonstration that moral truths are obtained by experience.<sup>2</sup> Of course

<sup>1</sup> *Théodicée*, part ii., p. 547.

<sup>2</sup> *Nouv. ess.*, liv. ii., chap. xxviii. *Op. cit.*, p. 285.

these truths are not, as Descartes and the English Intellectualists assumed, born with us in the form of complete knowledge; rather, we possess them as obscure impulses. Leibniz here appeals to our natural sentiment for humanity, the social instinct, the sense of dignity and propriety, which are indeed strengthened by education and experience, but which man possesses prior to education. Thus moral knowledge, like all other knowledge, consists in the increasing clearness of these originally obscure ideas. Here Leibniz introduces a thought to which no previous ethical system had given expression, although it is clearly indicated in the natural conditions of the moral life, especially under its religious aspects; the thought, namely, that all moral effort is effort after an *ideal*. This effort can reach its goal only by degrees; the finite human will can never wholly attain to the ideal. The setting up of such an ideal and the gradual approximation to it are facts of experience. For Leibniz they form at the same time a welcome confirmation of the metaphysical presuppositions of his ethics. Every existence strives towards perfection; but perfection is virtue. Thus virtue for him includes all aspects of human existence—and here his concept of virtue approaches that of ancient ethics—but the highest virtues are those which proceed from the activity of reason and consist in the effort towards more perfect knowledge and in that love to God and our fellow-men which is based on a knowledge of our own place in the universe.

This thought of development does not appear at all in Spinoza. As his conception of substance is that of unmoved existence with unalterable and infinite attributes, so his ethics, while it recognises defect, suffering, inadequate knowledge, as the opposites of power, activity and adequate knowledge, leaves these contradictions unsolved; he nowhere reaches the conception of a possible development of imperfection



into perfection. Leibniz' philosophy is the first ethical system to which we can apply the term *Perfectionism*. The notion of a gradual approach to perfection had a greater and more fruitful influence on succeeding time than any of his other doctrines. Its immediate development was through Wolff and his school, together with the related popular philosophy of the German Enlightenment in the next century.

(d) *Wolff and the German Enlightenment.*

The independent importance of *Christian Wolff* is even less in ethics than in other branches of philosophy. Here, however, he may claim the merit of having collected Leibniz' scattered thoughts, formed them into a systematic whole, and applied them to the various departments of life. Although the comprehensive and thorough manner in which he performed his task prevents his works on ethics and jurisprudence from being entirely enjoyable reading nowadays,<sup>1</sup> yet he had a strong influence on his time, and is largely responsible for the fact that Leibniz' Perfectionism became the keynote of German moral philosophy in the last century. Not only is this fact shown by the younger members of his own school, but even the opponents of the Leibniz-Wolffian system and the eclectic popular philosophers who had felt the influence of Locke, follow more closely in the footsteps of Leibniz as regards his views on ethical questions than in any other respect.

At the same time *two* defects are apparent both in Wolff, and, still more clearly, in his successors, which were less noticeable in Leibniz, partly because of his more general treatment of the subject, partly because of his profounder conception of moral problems. The *first* consists in the

<sup>1</sup> The essential points of his theory may be found in the shorter German works: *Vernünftige Gedanken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen*, 6th ed., 1739; *Vern. Gedanken von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen*, 4th ed., 1736.

restriction of Perfectionism to the *individual*. In spite of their zealous support of perfection as the fundamental moral principle, these moralists ignore the question as to whether moral perfection is not also an historical fact, a law of development that applies to the whole of humanity. Some of them, for example Moses Mendelssohn, were even inclined to answer this question in the negative. *Lessing* is the only thinker whose historical sense transcends the limitations of his co-workers and contemporaries; and next to Lessing stands *Herder*, whose views were of course opposed to the aims of popular intellectual philosophy in many other respects.

The *second* defect of this philosophy is, like the first, a legacy from the Leibnizian system, where it passed almost unnoticed by reason of the breadth and profundity of its author's thought. When this profundity had given place to the shallow and prosaic common sense of his successors, the defect in question assumed more prominence. It consists in that predominance of *Intellectualism* which we can trace even in Leibniz, but which is now transformed, under the influence of the common-sense spirit, into a superficial utilitarianism. The perfect is made equivalent to the useful. Already, in Wolff, we find this utilitarianism furnishing a support for the external teleology which governs his conception of nature. If, as the fundamental thought of this teleology affirms, the whole order of nature exists only for the benefit of man, the obvious moral application is that man should try all things with a view to the use he may derive from them, and act accordingly. In all these points the ethics of the German Enlightenment finds an important confirmation in the moral philosophy of Locke and the succeeding theological utilitarians whose writings obtained wide circulation in Germany during the last century.

It was inevitable that this prevailing tendency should bring

about a reaction similar to that of the Scottish philosophy against Locke and his followers in England. Such a reaction took place as a matter of fact, and with far greater force than in England; for *Kant*, who combated the utilitarian eudæmonism of the philosophy of the German Enlightenment, had previously undertaken to destroy all the metaphysical groundwork which, since Descartes and Leibniz, rationalism had regarded as impregnable. Together with the metaphysics of his predecessors, Kant demolished their metaphysical ethics, and thus opened new avenues for the further development of ethics. This development, which extends down to our own times, may be considered as subdividing into *two* tendencies closely analogous to their two predecessors. Kant himself, starting from rationalism, originates the ethics of *modern speculative idealism*. To this there is opposed an ethics of *realism* which in England is immediately connected with the moral philosophy of preceding thinkers, partly with that of Locke, partly with that of the Scottish school; while in Germany and France it makes various independent experiments, which have only recently begun to show a tendency in the direction of the related English doctrines.

### 3. THE ETHICS OF KANT AND OF SPECULATIVE IDEALISM.

#### (a) *Kant*.

If, beginning with what is now regarded as the most important of Kant's achievements, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, one follows the further development of the critical philosophy, the inclination is so strong to regard his reconstruction of epistemology, the limitation of knowledge to experience, and the consequent destruction of preceding transcendental metaphysics, as the great point of his system, that one is tempted to treat his later and ethical works as

supplementary and relatively subordinate in significance. Yet even the earlier critical writings furnish indications enough that the philosopher himself took a different view of the comparative importance of the various parts of his work. True, it was the weakness of the Wolffian metaphysic, its rational ontology, psychology and theology, which first impressed Kant; but this only led him to a clearer conviction of the necessity of seeking another basis for ethics, which should be no longer open to the doubts that metaphysical ethics and the philosophy of religion had to encounter. Thus we find that even his critical masterpiece shows a deliberate attempt to clear the ground for a new foundation of ethics; and he does not conceal his conviction that this effort will be successful in proportion as the supposed science of dogmatic metaphysics can be proved fallacious, and the necessary limitations of all knowledge can be shown to lie at the borderline of experience.

Kant himself has testified that the reading of Hume made a deep impression on him.<sup>1</sup> But Hume had, with inexorable logic, exposed the sophistry of the ontological argument for the existence of God, and had rejected all theological foundation for his ethics. Kant could not evade the acuteness of Hume's reasoning; but on the other hand he was quite as firmly convinced that Hume's empirical derivation from self-love and sympathy could not suffice to explain the facts of conscience. He therefore matured the plan of founding an idealistic ethics in the Platonic sense, though without any of those supports borrowed from a transcendental knowledge of God and the world, which Plato and the succeeding Christian ethics, as well as modern metaphysics, had employed. In proportion as he succeeded in showing that Plato's ethical position stood in no real

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*. Introduction. Mahaffy and Bernard's trans., p. 6.

need of these supports, the more earnestly did he endeavour to carry out Hume's work to its completion; and, himself educated in the school of dogmatic rationalism, to follow its doctrines through all their ramifications in order to prove the ultimate futility of its efforts. In the preface to the second edition of the *Critique*, Kant expressly stated that 'it was necessary for him to destroy knowledge in order to make room for faith.'<sup>1</sup> For the false dogmatism of metaphysics seemed to him the real source of 'all that unbelief which makes against morality,' and which is itself 'exceedingly dogmatic.'

It was thus Kant's declared purpose from the start to abolish the metaphysical basis on which ethics had rested hitherto, and to furnish morality with a new foundation, independent of metaphysical theories, and for that reason all the more secure. His whole critique of previous metaphysics, as well as his own epistemology, are the expression of this endeavour: hence the great emphasis which he lays on the limitation of knowledge to experience, hence the prominence given to the doctrine that the transcendental ideas as postulates of practical reason may claim with all the greater assurance the validity which must be denied them as products of theoretical reason.<sup>2</sup> And so, in the destroyer of the whole metaphysical system which originated with Platonism, we are confronted with a phenomenon like that displayed by its founder. Plato's doctrine of ideas had grown out of ethical postulates and desires, and such elements had made their influence felt in all the subsequent development of metaphysics. Kant's critique of all metaphysics also grew out of ethical needs, but having proved the metaphysical basis of ethics to be useless he prefers to abandon it. In English moral

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller's trans., ii., p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*. Appendix to the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Müller's trans., pp. 55 ff. *Critique of Practical Reason*, Abbott's trans. Preface, p. 90.

philosophy the separation of ethics from theology and metaphysics had already taken place, and ethics had in consequence been based on the empirical principles of utility and sympathy. Kant's peculiarity lies in the fact that he takes the *first* step with the English moralists, but not the *second*. Here he remains true to the presuppositions of Platonic ethics: *the origin of moral ideas is not empirical, but supersensuous.*

This position, of course, is tenable only if we regard the principles of empirical knowledge and the sources of the moral consciousness as eternally distinct. Our empirical knowledge, the forms of our intuition and conceptual thought, are throughout restricted to the world of sense. But we find within ourselves at the same time the idea of a supersensuous world, whose reality is not abolished by the fact that the machinery of empirical knowledge cannot be applied to it. On the contrary, Kant is of the opinion that experience itself not only leaves open the possibility of a supersensuous existence back of it, but even requires, in a certain sense, such an assumption, since all the content of experience is comprehended by us as *phenomenon*, and phenomenon points to a *thing in itself*, that is, an existence independent of the subjective forms of our intuition and thought, and so for us absolutely transcendent.<sup>1</sup> We are, accordingly, both sensuous and supersensuous beings. As sensuous beings we come under the causality of nature, and use the forms of intuition and thought on whose employment all the uniformity of nature rests; as supersensuous beings we are the possessors of these forms of thought and intuition, and so not subject to them, their province being limited to phenomena. This use of the concept of the '*Ding an sich*,' an unconditioned ground of

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason, Analytic*, chap. iii., Müller's trans., pp. 205 ff. *Critique of Practical Reason*, Abbott's trans., p. 215.

the phenomenal world, now becomes the foundation for our faith in a supersensuous world, for the special reason that there is *in us* one principle which we cannot relate to our sensuous existence, but only to that which is supersensuous. This principle is the *moral law*. It requires of us moral action unconditionally, and therefore supposes the full autonomy of our will. Now as a link in the chain of phenomena the will is not unconditioned, but subject to causality. Hence the moral law arises from the supersensuous nature of our being. If, then, among these ideas of the unconditioned, to which theoretical reason leads in its endeavour to complete the series of conditions, the idea of *freedom* is established through the fundamental law of practical reason, the moral law, then the practical validity of the other ideas also is secured. For the moral law requires of us *perfect* virtue, which as sensuous and rational beings we are unable to attain; it therefore presupposes a supersensuous world, in which we may fulfil this postulate of the moral law, and a supersensuous power which will aid us in our task. The immortality of the soul and the existence of God, which can never be theoretically proved, transform themselves after this fashion into *practical postulates*.<sup>1</sup>

With Kant, as with Plato, it is the requirements of *morality* that lead to the hypothesis of the reality of an ideal world. But while Plato and succeeding rationalistic metaphysics sought to find a *theoretical* proof for this reality, Kant abandons the task and insures to the supersensuous world the character of a practical postulate. Of course, however, even Kant cannot get on without a theoretical proof of some sort. On the one hand, the fact that owing to the subjective and *a priori* character of the forms of our intuition and concepts, all our knowledge has

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*. Book i., chap. iii., and Book ii., chap. ii.

to do with *phenomena*, proves the necessity of assuming a thing in itself, an intelligible world; while, on the other hand, the universality of the moral law proves the *autonomy of the will*. The premiss of this proof,—that the moral law is an unconditionally obligatory norm,—Kant does not, indeed, prove, but rather assumes; nor would he have made this assumption had he not, on the one hand, supposed a legislative power from which the norm proceeds, and, on the other hand, ascribed to the will freedom to follow the law. Thus the two conclusions which Kant deduces from the moral law are really its necessary presuppositions.

Inasmuch, however, as Kant's own theory reverses the relation posited by previous metaphysicians between the transcendental ideas and the moral law, the former being now derived from the latter instead of the latter from the former, we must abandon the view which regards the sense-world as a copy of the world of ideas in the Platonic fashion, or, with Spinoza and most of the modern metaphysicians, conceives of it as a part of the eternal existence of the supersensuous being. The sensuous and ideal worlds must be kept wholly distinct. The task of Kant in his theoretical as in his practical philosophy is to make the chasm between the two worlds as apparent as possible: now by stating that our intuitions and concepts have no application to the thing in itself, now by making the moral law independent of sensuous and empirical motives of any sort, especially of our own *emotions*; so that with Spinoza and the Stoics he refuses to recognise *benevolence* as a moral spring of action, and considers right conduct which arises from an *inclination* towards duty as less worthy.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there is for Kant no such thing as an inclination towards duty, for the

<sup>1</sup> *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, sect. ii., pp. 29 ff. Abbott's trans.



sensuous man would act only from egoistic motives. Kant makes the moral worth of a right action consist in the very fact that it is done against resistance. He is thus brought to the point where his scorn for the sensuous world outdoes Platonism, and his rigidity surpasses Stoicism. This result, however, was the inevitable consequence of his attempt to regard the sensuous and moral realms as wholly diverse; he was forced, on pain of inconsistency, to reject both the emotional and intellectual factors in morality, since they both belong to empirical reality. Thus nothing but the moral law, wholly unrelated to experience, was left.

But just as the moral law, though only a practical postulate, cannot entirely dispense with a theoretical foundation, so Kant obviously cannot altogether neglect the concept of *happiness*, intimately related as it is to ethics. Absolute separation from the phenomenal world being required, the only way in which such a theoretical basis could be obtained was by transforming the negation of the phenomenal world into a positive antithesis, the *phenomenon* being opposed to the thing in itself, *i.e.*, that which is not appearance but being; and *causal conditionality* being opposed to freedom. In like manner, it now becomes necessary to banish happiness from the world of experience into the supersensuous world, the latter being now considered morally as well as sensuously the antithesis of the former. The morality of the sense-world is imperfect; it therefore requires a *perfect* morality which can become actual only in the supersensuous world. There where sensuous impulses have no disturbing power, it assumes the character of the *summum bonum*.<sup>1</sup> There is no need to indicate further Kant's dangerous proximity at this point to the theological utilitarianism of his time. It would be asking too much of man's sensuous nature, swayed

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*, tr. by Abbott., part i., book ii., chap. ii., pp. 206 ff.

by emotions and hopes, to hold before him a *summum bonum* as reward, and at the same time require him to do right without any regard to this future good. In any case the moral antithesis between the two worlds is necessarily incomplete, since the moral nature of the intelligible world is constantly penetrating into the world of sense under the form of the moral law; so that here the gulf between the two is bridged. The Ideas are no longer absolutely transcendent; we now have the sense-world partaking of the nature of the Ideas, after the Platonic fashion. The necessity of a return to practical and theoretical Platonism, if, as Kant intends, we are to make any empirical use of the ideas, is obvious from the nature of that idea which leads to the practical postulates of reason, the idea of *Freedom*. We may consistently suppose the will to be empirically subject to natural causality, but in itself free, only so long as the postulate of freedom is not applied to empirical acts. But as soon as such an application is made, there is no other way out of the difficulty, unless one is satisfied with the mere makeshift of a twofold aspect, save to assume once more an invasion of the sense-world by the ideas. All empirical events will then be subject to natural causality, except where free-will interrupts it, and where, in consequence, an intelligible act enters the phenomenal world as the absolute beginning of a causal series. This is an interpretation with which Kant's own mode of expression seems in many places to agree, though elsewhere, of course, the opposite theory of a twofold aspect of voluntary acts prevails.

But not only is Kant's conception of the intelligible world negatively determined by that of the world of phenomena, through the opposition in which the two are placed; the positive influence of the principles of empirical knowledge upon the transcendental foundations of ethics is necessarily

increased, the more devoid of content the concept of morality becomes by reason of its complete separation from experience. If the moral law is independent of all empirical content its character must be merely formal. But the term 'formal' cannot be applied to it in the sense of the Aristotelian ethics, which obtained a formal definition of virtue by abstraction from the special content of the various empirical virtues: it must be formal as the forms of intuition and thought are formal principles of our theoretical knowledge. Thus the moral law is for Kant an *a priori* law valid *prior* to and independent of all empirical application. Starting from this standpoint he obtains his formula: "So act that the maxim of thy will might serve at the same time as a principle of universal legislation." Since this law is *a priori*, and hence independent of the special conditions of its empirical application, it is for Kant a *categorical imperative*, an unconditional command of duty, which cannot be made to depend on any utilitarian or other considerations.<sup>1</sup>

We should at the outset avoid an interpretation of this categorical imperative to which many of Kant's own remarks might lead us. The categorical imperative must not be regarded as a *product of inner experience* or as a *fact* immediately given to us, for experiences and facts always presuppose a definite content. Rather, like the forms of knowledge, it is a principle which can come to consciousness only in its application to a concrete empirical content. It enters into every inner or outer act which takes place in the moral realm; and the proof of its purely formal nature lies merely in the fact that it cannot be derived from the given sensuous content of experience. No more than the spatial form of intuition can, according to Kant, be

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*, part i., book i., §§ 7 and 8. *Metaphysic of Morals*, chap. ii.

derived from the sense-material of sensations to which we give the space-order, can we explain the moral law from the *sensuous* motives of our actions, for these motives always contradict the law. From this conflict between the moral law and our sensuous inclinations Kant derives *conscience*, which he defines as 'the power of self-directed moral judgment,' or as 'the consciousness of an inner tribunal in man,' which decides whether our actions are or are not in accord with the moral law.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere is Kant's affinity with Christian ethics more apparent than in this theory of conscience and in the sharp antithesis between the moral law and sensuous inclination upon which the theory is based, and to which he was led through his effort to contrast the province of theoretical knowledge, which is confined within the limits of sense, and that of practical freedom, which proceeds from the intelligible nature of man. Two considerations make against such a contrast: first, the fact that the distinction between form and content, which originates in empirical knowledge, is transferred to the realm of intelligible freedom; and secondly, the further inconsistency that even here it is only the *form* which is sought in the intelligible world, while the *contents* must be obtained from the world of sense. This distinction involves another: that form and contents bear an essentially different relation to each other in this case from that which they have in the case of knowledge. We are not *obliged* to apply the moral law to every empirical contents of sensuous acts, as we are obliged to apply the space-form to every content of sense-perceptions; but we *can* do so, because the moral law stands for intelligible freedom. But when we do not follow the moral law, we follow motives of inclination, such as pleasure, self-interest, etc., which

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysik der Sitten*, edited by Rosenkranz and Schubert, vol. ix., p. 246. *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, *op. cit.*, vol. x., p. 224.

spring from the sensuous contents of experience. It thus appears that while the categorical imperative is, on the one hand, regarded as the *a priori* form, valid for every contents of empirical actions, on the other hand it must conflict with this contents itself. Now, such a war between the moral and the sensuous is thinkable from the Platonic standpoint, which regards the two as real opposing forces; but not from the Kantian, which makes the moral law a purely formal principle, finding its empirical contents in the actual fact of our deeds. The theory thus tends inevitably towards the supposition that the moral law is not *pure form*, but possesses a contents, which is merely veiled by the Kantian formulation. Unless it expresses in a general way the *contents* of actions which are morally good, it cannot enter into real conflict with other maxims which we call immoral.

This conclusion is confirmed by a closer examination of the Kantian formula. It is self-evident that a principle which presupposes not only the active ego, but a multitude of beings who act in a similar manner, cannot be purely *a priori*. The case is quite different with the forms of intuition and the categories, where nothing is presupposed but the sensation-material, which may be regarded as merely affections of the ego. The conception of a multitude of moral personalities, on the other hand, is surely an experience which enters consciousness at a relatively late period; now up to the time when this experience arises the moral law must have remained wholly latent. But even if we grant this possibility, the form of the moral law will not apply itself immediately upon the occurrence of the experience, as the space-form does to perceived sensations, or the concept of substance to perceptions persisting in time. For since the moral law requires us to act in a way that would be suitable for universal legislation, a question arises which must be answered before we can apply the law to any empirical

content. What kind of action is suited to universal legislation? Kant says it is self-evident that I cannot will lying, for instance, to become a universal law, because then people would pay me in my own coin, and I should not be believed myself; and that we could not take hate as a universal principle, because no one could then hope to obtain the assistance he needed.<sup>1</sup> Now if these answers are the results of *reflection*, even in its simplest form, then obviously the moral law is not a formal principle which can be applied immediately and *a priori* to the empirical contents of actions; its application presupposes in every special case empirical deliberation as to the universal practicability of a given mode of action. In the case of such reflection preceding the application of the moral law, it would be inevitable that the welfare and injury of the personal ego should be taken as a test of the possibility of universal legislation. Thus all Kant's reasoning reduces itself to egoistic utilitarianism when we come down to individual cases. In making the special case into a universal law, Kant not only neglects the influence of egoistic motives; he even maintains that virtuous action is not determined by regard to personal advantage, but by pure reverence for the moral law. The details of his proof make it obvious that as soon as reflection concerning the end of moral action is made to proceed solely from the standpoint of the individual, egoistic utilitarianism is the almost inevitable consequence. Such a conclusion being opposed to Kant's own ethical needs, he hoped to avoid it by making his moral law so abstract that the utilitarianism would be concealed by the idea of 'universal legislation.' In a passionless self-surrender to this idea, which is as a matter of fact hardly qualified to awaken emotion, he found a welcome aid in expressing his dislike of every sort of eudæmonism and

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysic of Morals*, Abbott's tr., p. 40.

his endeavour to make a complete separation between the moral and the sensuous realms.

Kant thus occupies a peculiar position midway between the secular and the theological utilitarianism of his time. His detailed discussions regarding the application of the moral law belong to the former. His tendency towards the latter is shown by the opposition which he supposes between the commands of duty and natural inclination, as well as by the transcendental eudæmonism, the notion of a supersensuous *summum bonum*, with which he combines it. On the other hand, the formal and *a priori* character of the categorical imperative, which finds its basis in his own epistemology, is purely Kantian. But since this formal character is at the same time a *transcendent* character, indicating that its source lies in our supersensuous nature, we can see a tendency here towards theological utilitarianism, which also makes the moral law transcendent, although at the same time giving it a definite contents and deriving it from the direct command of God. This tendency is further developed in Kant's philosophy of religion, where he recognises the possibility of deriving the moral law from a divine command. But he reverses the causal relation between the moral law and the idea of God. We are not to reverence the moral law as unconditionally binding because it is given by God; but we are to reverence it as a divine law on which we base our faith in God Himself, because we feel it to be unconditionally binding.<sup>1</sup> These relations with the theological utilitarianism of his time are in accord with his efforts to establish an affinity between his own ethics and certain dogmas of the Church, such as original sin, justification by faith, salvation through Christ; efforts similar to Leibniz' attempted ethical interpretation of Church doctrines, only in a form even more rationalised and moderate. His theory of law, too, suffers from its restriction within the

<sup>1</sup> *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, p. 69.

arbitrary conceptions which were held by the intellectualistic ethics of his time, and which were based wholly on egoistic and utilitarian considerations.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these defects, the Kantian ethics exerted a profound influence. For this it was indebted largely to the *sternness of its notion of duty*,—its emphatic rejection of eudæmonistic and utilitarian motives. In proportion as such motives obtained a wider influence in the philosophy of the English and French, and even, ultimately, of the German Enlightenment, the stronger was the attraction of Kant's rigid ethical principles for minds which were repelled by that superficial, every-day morality, with its arguments based on selfish calculation, or, at best, on worldly wisdom. Something of the asceticism of Christian ethics survives in the Kantian conception of duty, which is at the same time a product of the atmosphere of seriousness which pervaded Protestant Germany in the reign of Frederick.<sup>2</sup>

(b) *Fichte*.

German post-Kantian Idealism developed Kant's views chiefly in the direction of reconciling the antithesis between the phenomenal and the intelligible which Kant had maintained, and which was so important for ethics. The chasm between the sensuous and the moral worlds, too, was bridged by the attempt to represent both as stages in an inner and necessary development. Just as, according to *Fichte*, subject and object are moments in the development of one and the same absolute Ego, so the sensuous and the moral worlds, the realm of knowledge and that of practical action form one single chain in the activities of this Ego,—a chain where every link proceeds necessarily from the one before it.

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*. Works, vol. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. my address: *Ueber den Zusammenhang der Philosophie mit der Zeitgeschichte, eine Centenarbetrachtung*. *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1890.



There is a lingering trace of the Platonic antithesis to be found in the fact that the theoretical Ego is conscious of itself as passive, the practical Ego as active. But the contrast is obliterated when we are told that the knowing Ego has itself produced, solely through its own activity, the limits which appear to it as an operative object; while the existence of morality rests on the fact that a limit is constantly set to the action of the Ego, beyond which it seeks to pass to a goal at whose infinite distance it will attain complete autonomy. Hence, for Fichte all moral action is *a striving towards the Ideal*. The ideal is the destiny of man, which is always to be striven for, though it can never be fully attained. Fichte's moral law is, "Always fulfil thy destiny."<sup>1</sup> Thus besides the reconciliation of the empirical and intelligible, the sensuous and moral, we have added as a new element the *thought of development*.

This introduction of the development idea, like the mediation between the sensuous and intelligible worlds, marks a distinct advance beyond Kant. By the aid of these conceptions, Fichte succeeds in avoiding the wholly unmanageable thought of a conflict between the contentless formal principle and sensuous impulses and inclinations which are empirically determined. The conflict remains, but it is transformed into a conflict between opponents of like nature, by being reduced to the opposition between moral and sensuous impulses. That is, the effort towards morality is itself regarded as an *impulse*, which can only be the case if it is essentially conditioned by dependence on sense, or, as Fichte puts it, by the limitations which the activity of the Ego imposes upon itself. Fichte's only reminiscence of Plato and Kant is in regarding the moral impulse as the *pure* impulse—as the longing which seeks

<sup>1</sup> *System der Sittenlehre*, 1798. Works, vol. iv., pp. 18 ff.

to overcome every sensuous barrier—and in ultimately making the sensuous and the evil coincide.

But the dislike of nature which is so characteristic of the Platonic philosophy, takes on an essentially new form in this Idealism. The external world, speculatively regarded as the self-limited activity of the Ego, possesses practically only the significance of a *medium* for its activity, a *material* for its operation. Nature is not an end in itself, but 'things are what we make of them.' The moral task which the Ego must accomplish is thus to make the object serve the purposes of the subject. Reason strives to realise itself by actualising *the moral order* in the natural world. This takes place in a series of developments, whose last stage is in infinity, and whose every stage possesses a definite ethical significance. Thus, the Ego first discovers itself to be a self-conscious individuality; as such, however, it is only possible if it forms one among many rational beings. Since each one of these must ascribe to itself the same free actuality, the relation of the individual to the whole becomes a *relation of law*. It is characteristic of Fichte's attitude, which is still prejudiced in favour of the individualistic conceptions of the previous century, that his deduction of the concept of law assumes nothing but the *freedom of the individual*, so that here too the State is regarded as a contrivance, whose sole object is to preserve individual freedom. Since all men have an equal right to such freedom, Fichte would even like to establish regulations that should do away with the inequality of property which hinders the exercise of this right. But the logical consequences of his fundamental thought compel him, as early as his first work on the philosophy of right, to transcend these limitations. Since it is *one and the same* reason from which the multitude of individuals take their origin, reason must find a new *unity* in the State, and yet more fully, in humanity as a whole. Fichte's later political

schemes, which remind one strongly of the ideal State in the Platonic *Republic*, are conceived in this spirit.<sup>1</sup>

While the restrictions which Fichte saw fit to impose on the politics of the individual state in his work *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat*<sup>2</sup> present a remarkable contrast to that broadly humanitarian ideal of morality which gradually overcomes his subjectivism, his original bias betrays itself again in his statement that the highest ideal of the common life of human beings is 'that where all national ties shall be superfluous,'<sup>3</sup> and in the fact that the State finds no place in the development of his theory of morals. It is all the more interesting to note the influence exerted upon his whole attitude here by an exclusively intellectual conception of morality and a surrender of the individual will to the *one Pure Reason*, which recall Spinoza. In opposition to natural impulse, whose aim is *enjoyment*, we have the result of the moral impulse described as *pure self-satisfaction*. For enjoyment is a consequence of the limitation of our nature, from which the moral impulse strives to be free. All natural impulses, even sympathy, are therefore as such immoral, and only to be tolerated because man must always remain a finite being. But even in his finitude he has reached the highest stage attainable for him, when he acts *solely for the sake of duty*; when he does not rejoice in his act, but *coldly approves* it. "In the sphere of action what is thus approved is called *right*; in the sphere of knowledge it is called *true*."<sup>4</sup> Spinoza, Kant and Intellectualism are here blended into one. If the question be asked, 'What, then, is

<sup>1</sup> *Grundlage des Naturrechts*, 1796. Works, iii., p. 203. *Staatslehre von 1813*, iv., pp. 431 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat*, 1800. Works, iii., p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Nature of the Scholar*. Fichte's Popular Works. Trans. by Wm. Smith, i., p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> *System der Sittenlehre*, p. 167.

the Right?' it is answered: That which you recognise in your *conscience* as duty,—a categorical imperative which avoids formulating a moral law of definite content. This much only is added, that reason and will, which are identical in Fichte's system, remind us that the world is the material for our duty, and that we should strive to give to morality a visible form. In this striving we exercise creative activity, and are ourselves a part of that whole which we call the moral world order, and which for Fichte coincides with God. In his later discussions of the subject Fichte brings this Universal Being more and more into prominence, and relegates the finite will to the background; until at length the actual world becomes for him the realisation of a world beyond the actual, where the limitations of multiplicity and temporality tend more and more to disappear, and which manifests itself in the individual as *love to humanity*. The principle of the moral law is now contemplation of God, who is alike its purpose and its realisation.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the views of this thinker we find a *double* change of tendency, metaphysical and ethical. His Idealism, which bears at first a strongly subjective stamp, later assumes a form at once pantheistic and religious; his principle of morals, originally individualistic and bent on making the whole serve the purposes of the individual, gradually loses sight of the individual in the development of universal reason. These changes took place so gradually and imperceptibly that Fichte was able to declare with some show of truth that his philosophy had always been the same. But here, as is so often the case, a change in the attitude of an individual philosopher is but the reflection of the general tendency of thought in his time. For ethics, Fichte marks the transition from the individualism and subjectivism of the previous century to a broader view of life, which puts a

<sup>1</sup> *Die Thatfachen des Bewusstseins*, 1813. Works, ii., pp. 652 ff.

higher value on the *objective* manifestations of morality in law, the State, and history. In this spirit the work begun by Fichte was completed by *Hegel*.

(c) *Hegel*.

*Hegel*, by adopting Fichte's speculative assumption of a dialectical development of all concepts and of the reality reflected in concepts, wholly abandoned the division between the sensuous and moral realms which his predecessor had inherited from Kant; at any rate he succeeded so far in avoiding it that he does not even find it available in the thought of a dialectical development by means of the opposed moments of nature and spirit. Since, however, nature and spirit and the various stages of the psychic life are here regarded as moments in a logical development, where Fichte's concept of limitations, like his antithesis between the passive and active Ego, is abandoned, the distinction between the practical and theoretical realms also disappears. The two blend in the general concept of the *rational*. The moral world like the natural manifests the activity of the world-soul, only in a higher form. Like the natural world, it forms a logically determined structure of conceptual forms. Hegel neglects the opposition between what ought to be and what is, which Kant had declared to be the relation between moral and natural law. "What is rational is real, and what is real is rational."<sup>1</sup> We have a reversion to the purely contemplative standpoint of Spinoza's ethics. But this new Spinozism differs from the old in two essential points. First, the ethics of Spinoza, in accordance with the tendency of his time, remained individualistic. Wherein consists the happiness of the *individual*? That was the moral problem as he conceived it. For Hegel, on the other hand, those aspects of the moral

<sup>1</sup> *Rechtsphilosophie*. Preface, p. 17. Works, vol. viii.

life which relate to the single moral personality, such as the *rights* which the individual may claim from others or from the community, and *subjective* morality in general, are the lower aspects; while true morality is exercised in the ordinances of the community, in the family, in civic society, and, finally, in the moral spirit of the world's history.<sup>1</sup> Hegel, therefore, places the source of morality not in the subjective but in the *objective* will, *i.e.* that impersonal power of the universal world-reason which is shared and actualised by individual wills. This general conception of morality revives in a broader spirit the fundamental thought of the Platonic politics, namely, that the good can be attained only in the *State*, and then not as the good of individuals, but as a good which becomes objective in the political community itself. The second important difference between Hegel and Spinoza consists in Hegel's introduction of the idea of *development*. Hegel's philosophy, too, is evolutionism, but in quite a different sense from that of Leibniz or Fichte. For Hegel the question at issue does not concern the perfection of the moral subject; the process of development takes place in the domain of objective knowledge, the universal world-reason. The motive power of this development is no longer held to lie in subjective freedom of the will, but is rather conceived of as the logical necessity immanent in reason. Hegel's view of the world is as much influenced by the notion of necessity as is Spinoza's; but the latter's conception of fixed unalterable substance has given place to that of the development of Absolute Reason.

Undoubtedly the importance of the Hegelian philosophy, so far as ethics is concerned, rests on its complete avoidance of the customary subjective view of ethics, of which only a faint trace remains in the relation of law and morals to

<sup>1</sup> *Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 312. *Encyklopaedie d. philos. Wissenschaften*, iii., p. 376. Works, vol. vii., part ii.

the individual personality. The ethos is no longer merely individual; individuals partake of it and realise it, but the ethos itself in all its forms is the *world-will*, the objectification of the Absolute Reason, the unfolding of divinity in the human race and its history. This is certainly a loftier conception than that of ordinary subjectivistic morals, and it brings out a noteworthy defect in the latter. Subjective ethics assumes as an *a priori* certainty that society exists only for the individual. It knows the ethos only under the form of the individual moral personality. Evidently moral judgment must take on a different character as soon as it is posited that the State, society, and history are not merely means to serve individual ends, but *ends in themselves*; that they possess an independent ethos to which individuals are but auxiliary.

To have raised this question must be regarded as a great merit on the part of post-Kantian Idealism, and especially of Hegel. It is a merit which to a certain extent outweighs the many defects of his system, such as his arrogant attitude towards the special sciences and the empty formalism of his dialectical method. But whether his theory did not defeat its own ends by too complete a disregard of the individual aspect of morals is another and quite pertinent question. Spinoza, whose whole theory of the universe was determined by religious needs, identified morality with subjective religious absorption in the idea of the Absolute. It thus became for him a purely internal process. For Hegel it coincides with the objective *historical* development of the Absolute. But at the same time it gets so thoroughly involved with historical and factual elements that moral distinctions in the various departments of real life are quite neglected. This tendency to exalt that which is transient, that which is conditioned in the realm of Absolute Reason by transitory historical influences, is peculiarly damaging to Hegel's theory

of the *State*, which is copied after the abstract bureaucracy of the time of the Restoration, with its empty constitutional forms, wholly out of touch with the vital development of a national spirit.

Hegel himself regards individuals as sharing in the universal world-reason, and in the same way it may be said of his system that it partook of theories which were widely current in his time. This is shown by the fact that a number of contemporary thinkers, who differ from Hegel in many of their fundamental assumptions, agree with him in regarding morality as the activity of a universal world-reason, and in ascribing the very highest value to the civic and social aspects of moral life.

(d) *Intermediary Tendencies between Universalism and Individualism.*

In discussing the systems which fall under this head, we ought to pay particular attention to those which, in opposition to Hegel's extreme preference for the universal and objective forms of morality, assign the *individual* a juster position in the totality of moral life. Among the adherents of such systems *Schleiermacher* and *Krause* are especially noteworthy for the depth and force of their ethical views.

*Schleiermacher's* theory of morals is, by reason of its dialectical expression, most closely akin to the speculative ethics of Fichte and Hegel. Just as even in his dialectic he attempts to reconcile idealism and realism by assuming real forms and combinations of things to correspond with the conceptual forms and connections of our thought, and by making the process of knowledge to consist in a union of the two,<sup>1</sup> so in the domain of ethics he begins by setting *reason* over against *nature*. He thus makes the scope of morality very wide; its content is *the operation*

<sup>1</sup> *Dialektik*, edited by Jonas, § 106 ff.



of reason upon nature.<sup>1</sup> In a union of the two consists the concept of the *good*. There are as many goods as there are externally operative forms of reason; from the totality of them arises the concept of the *summum bonum*.<sup>2</sup> The power of reason over nature is *virtue*; the law according to which this power works is *duty*.<sup>3</sup> We can trace Fichte's influence in these opinions; but here nature is not regarded as a limitation from which the moral will strives to be free; it has become a real force, which is as necessary to the activity of reason, if morality is to result, as matter is to form. The importance of nature is still more clearly shown when Schleiermacher treats the processes of nature as *preliminary stages* to moral action. In mechanism and chemism, in vegetation and the growth of animals, we find the beginning of that unifying of reason and nature whose highest stage is *human culture*. This is a repetition of Hegel's attempt to resolve morality into a universal process of development which ultimately involves both nature and spirit: but it is a repetition varied by the introduction of an antithesis between reason and nature. The operation of reason, which displays itself in the lower stages as *impulse*, in the higher stages as *will*, is further divisible, according to Schleiermacher, into an *organising* and a *symbolising* power. The organising power strives to operate as such on nature, to actualise the law of reason in the natural world; the symbolising power makes use of nature to obtain external sensuous symbols of its action. Thus, traffic and property belong to the domain of the organising activity, speech and art to that of the symbolising power; speech being the mode of expressing thought, and art

<sup>1</sup> *Grundriss d. philosophischen Ethik*, edited by Tewsten. Introduction, ii. and iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Philos. Ethik*, pp. 38 ff. *Grundlinien einer Kritik der bisherigen Sittenlehre*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Philos. Ethik*, pp. 179, 207.

that of expressing feeling. To these four spheres of rational activity there correspond finally four ethical organisations: the *state*, the *social community*, the *school* and the *church*. These Schleiermacher brings into a certain relation with his four cardinal virtues: *prudence*, *perseverance*, *wisdom* and *love*.<sup>1</sup> And he further assumes four corresponding spheres of obligation: *legal obligation*, *professional obligation*, the *obligation of love* and that of *conscience*. The general contents of these is determined by the formulation of the moral laws.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the Kantian formula, this theory defines the *contents* of moral action with the utmost completeness. The general character of Schleiermacher's ethics resembles that of Fichte's system. But he goes a step beyond Fichte in two respects. First, he does not regard the subject to which the moral law relates as indefinite, universal, or everywhere alike; it is the *concrete individual personality* with its peculiar dispositions and powers, and its *specific moral function* thereby determined. For him morality is *universal* only in so far as human nature is the same: it becomes *individual* as soon as the question is raised as to the peculiarities of the individual or his position in relation to the social organism. Schleiermacher's talent for the practical is nowhere more evident than in the emphasis which he lays upon the necessity of *individualising* morals. Here he introduces into ethical theory an element too little regarded hitherto. But he is far from wishing to treat ethics after the manner of Kant and of Fichte in his earlier speculations from an *exclusively individual* standpoint. His view is rather that the value of the specific moral character of the individual personality consists in the fact that it occupies a definite place, peculiar to itself alone, in the moral whole; and hence he emphasises, as none of his predecessors did, the moral

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 179-206.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 214-226.

significance of the *calling* or vocation. He agrees with Hegel that moral culture as a whole, realised in society, the State and humanity, has a higher importance than the single personality; but he will not allow the latter to be lost sight of in the former. He seeks rather to emphasise the importance of the individual to himself and to the whole.

The profundity of Schleiermacher's ethical speculations would perhaps be more convincingly evident if his theory were not marred by his dialectical prejudices, and by the consequent unwarrantable intermixture of natural philosophy. In this respect, however, the whole period was under the sway of Schelling's *Philosophy of Identity*. It is Schelling who dominates the thinker whose general ethical tendency is most closely akin to that of Schleiermacher, however different their views on other subjects,—*Karl Christian Krause*.

In Krause's philosophy we are repelled not only by the presence of certain speculative views now abandoned, but to a still greater degree by the remarkable terminology which he invented for himself. The disrepute into which his philosophical system has long since fallen is largely due to these exterior circumstances.<sup>1</sup> We may pass over his methodological principles with the more justice, since he does not possess any which we should to-day consider deserving of the name. He is governed by Schelling's doctrine of 'intellectual intuition,' that modern form of Neo-Platonic ecstasy,<sup>2</sup> which leads him at times to regard the fantasies of Swedenborg as philosophical revelations, with the result

<sup>1</sup> We are especially indebted to Krause's juristic followers for having contributed to the spread of his views by means of readable expositions. Cf. RÖDER, *Grundzüge des Naturrechts und der Rechtsphilosophie* (sic!), 2nd. ed., Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1863. AHRENS, *Naturrecht oder Philosophie des Rechts und des Staates*, 6th ed., vol. ii., Vienna, 1870-71.

<sup>2</sup> *Lebenlehre und Philosophie der Geschichte*, edited by Leonhardi, 1843, p. 155. *System der Rechtsphilosophie*, edited by Röder, 1874, pp. 73, 463 ff. *System der Sittenlehre*, i., 1810, p. 397.

that even in his philosophy of law he considers at length humanity as it exists in other worlds and in the whole universe. But, aside from all these fantastic notions, there are plenty of profound and significant ideas in Krause which ethical theory ought not to forget. Krause himself called his philosophy 'Panëtheism.' He meant that, while assuming the most intimate connection between God, the world and individuals, he avoided the pantheistic error of losing sight of God in the world or of individuals in the union of both. Here again we are reminded of Neo-Platonism; but Krause succeeded no better than his predecessors in making the emanation doctrine clear and comprehensible. Yet we must not overlook the fact that this doctrine permeates all his ethical views. Good originates through the operation of the primal divine will in human wills; hence the good is a universal law, and must be willed for its own sake.<sup>1</sup> Evil arises by reason of the limitation of the individual being, and hence, like a resolved dissonance, vanishes in the coherence of the whole. Indeed, the optimistic philosopher is persuaded that even in actual life, through the progress of education and culture, science and art, evil will become rarer and there will be an increasing tendency to regard it as merely a pathological phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

It is unnecessary to remark that these ideas are in no sense new. Their application, however, to the social life of man, as exercised in law, the State and history, may be regarded as new. Krause considers that all law originates in God, from whom proceed also the historical life of humanity and the divisions of society, down to the individual personality. In the organic structure of society, the universal has a higher importance, and therefore higher rights, than the more particular. Thus the State is subordinate to humanity as a whole, its various divisions to the State,

<sup>1</sup> *System der Sittenlehre*, i., pp. 279 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i., pp. 350 ff.

and, lastly, the individual personality is subordinate to the divisions of the State. Law in general, however, embraces not only the external but also the internal conditions of life ; its function is to place each man in a position to make his life the full expression of his spiritual nature, and thus to be true to the vocation which has fallen to his lot as a part of the organic whole of humanity.<sup>1</sup> By reason of this primary right of personality, even the restriction imposed upon the freedom of the malefactor must be used only as a means, never as an end. He should be treated as a minor, to be restored, where possible, to his place in society by education and enlightenment concerning his own actual rights and those of others.<sup>2</sup> Just as the individual is contained in the State and the State in organised humanity, so the historical life of humanity reproduces the life-periods of the individual ; it has a period of germination, of growth, and of maturity, at whose expiration the same evolution begins again on a higher plane, and so on *ad infinitum*.<sup>3</sup>

The ruling motive here is apparently the desire to do justice to all the aspects of morality, to the individual moral personality as well as to the realisation of moral ideas in law, the State and society ; the endeavour to assign to each department of morals in this 'organised structure' its proper place with reference to the whole. Here Krause resembles Schleiermacher. But how inferior he is in definiteness of conception ! True, Schleiermacher's ethics was based on a speculative philosophy of nature, and the fact was not to its advantage ; but its detailed development is sufficiently independent. With Krause metaphysics, ethics, æsthetics, the theory of law and politics, are blended in a mystical theosophy. The good and beautiful become a direct intuition of the divine ; all objective moral facts are "a

<sup>1</sup> *System d. Sittenlehre*, p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> *Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 310. *Lebenlehre und Philos. d. Geschichte*, pp. 307 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *System d. Sittenlehre*, p. 541.

manifestation of God in the finite." What the good and beautiful really are in themselves; how law and the State originate in their empirical reality, we do not learn; we must rest content with such explanations as "the intermingling of the primal Will with individual wills," and "the manifestation of God in history." Still, one point which Schleiermacher neglected is brought out by Krause. Despite his fantastic sentimentalities, his true historical sense made him a profounder student of the problems of *objective* morality in law, the State and history. Here Krause is in touch with Hegel, from whom, however, he is distinguished by his higher idea of the importance of the individual moral personality, which makes an essential difference in his conception of law. This is especially noteworthy in the emphasis he lays on a fundamental principle which is completely opposed to the older theories of law,—the principle that law is the organic whole of all the conditions of life that are dependent on human freedom. This conception alone insures to Krause an honourable place in the history of modern ethics, although there is little in his more detailed discussions that can be regarded as permanent.

While the thinkers whose systems we have been describing are marked by an endeavour to do justice to the importance of the individual in the totality of moral life, *Schopenhauer*, one of the last adherents of speculative idealism, shows a tendency completely opposite, though he, too, assumes that morality becomes objective in the State and in history. For him the individual personality is empty and transitory; only the race endures, for whose ends the individual works and sacrifices, all unconscious of the fact; indeed, deluding himself with the idea that he is furthering his own happiness.<sup>1</sup> Even the life of the race is an oscillation between

<sup>1</sup> *The World as Will and Idea*, i., especially §§ 66-68. *Preisschrift über die Grundlage der Moral*, 2nd edition, § 16 and § 22.

death and generation, where nothing is permanent save pain and the delusion of the individual. The State is a compulsory institution which holds in check the egoistic impulses and employs the terrors of punishment as the best means to that end. History is a fool's comedy, where every player thinks to deceive others and ends by deceiving himself. Art alone creates a temporary happiness, by rising to the pure, disinterested contemplation of ideas. The only permanent satisfaction, however, arises from a *negation of the will*, the abandonment of all effort; including in its completed form the effort after life itself. But the characteristic features of post-Kantian ethical speculation are evident even in Schopenhauer, for he can find no other source for the moral impulse save the universal world-will, where individual differences vanish. His moral principle, sympathy, appears to him incapable of empirical derivation. It is, as he expresses it, a mystery, which is revealed only in the *Ἐν καὶ πάντων*, in the truth that the Ego sees itself in others and, therefore, feels their sorrow as its own. Thus, almost against his will, the universalistic tendency of modern ethics betrays itself in the speculations of this unworldly philosopher.

#### 4. MODERN REALISTIC ETHICS.

Under the head of realistic ethics we may class all those systems which seek to derive ethical principles from the real relations of the moral life. These principles may at the same time possess an ideal character, in so far as we grant that under the form which the theory gives them they never attain complete and adequate realisation in experience. But they must not be derived from ideal presuppositions, *i.e.*, from such as cannot be substantiated in the real world.

Since realistic ethics sets out from the real moral facts of experience, its closest affinity is with the previous developments of empirical moral philosophy, to which it

bears a relation like that of the modern theories of speculative Idealism to earlier metaphysics. As regards its experiential basis, it may be considered simply a continuation of ethical empiricism. But while the latter was almost wholly occupied with investigating the *motives* of morality, and took comparatively little interest in its *ends*, it is the moral end which is the especial problem of the ethics of modern realism. In treating this problem, it is impossible to confine oneself wholly to the ground of experience, for these ends are represented as to be realised only in the future, and sometimes as entirely *ideal*, never to be completely attained. Still, the attitude of this system towards the moral ends remains realistic, for it regards them as belonging to the sense-world, and not, after the manner of Idealism, as transcendent, or as parts of a world-end, which is as a whole supersensuous.

(a) *Herbart's Practical Philosophy.*

The superiority of modern realistic ethics over its empirical predecessor as regards the point just discussed is especially apparent in the fact that, while the latter is always hostile to every form of metaphysics, for the former such hostility is quite unnecessary. *Herbart* is an important witness to this fact. True, he shows a desire to make ethics itself, at least, independent of metaphysical assumptions. He intentionally emphasises the statement that his practical philosophy may be followed without embracing his theoretical views and *vice versa*. Yet his metaphysics is also realistic; in fact, it is with especial reference to metaphysics that he calls himself an adherent of realism. But it is realistic in a different sense from his ethics; it is realistic as regards its end, not its presuppositions. These latter are not derived from reality, but from ideal postulates; their object, however, is to make what happens in the real world conceivable, and *Herbart*



expressly declines to make any excursion into transcendental realms, *e.g.*, into a discussion of the concept of God. Herbart's ethics, on the other hand, is realistic as regards its presuppositions, not its end. These presuppositions are derived from the empirical relations of the will. The moral end, however, is regarded as the realisation of certain *ideas*, which originate in these relations of the will, and whose full and undisturbed realisation can never be brought about in actual experience.

Since, according to Herbart, the pleasure which arises from *relations* is, generally speaking, of an *æsthetic* character, he classes ethics under the head of *æsthetics*. Here he bears a certain likeness to Shaftesbury. But the definite classification of those *relations of will* which are objects of approval, the derivation of moral *ideas* from these relations, and, finally, the deduction of moral *systems* from these ideas,—all this is peculiar to Herbart.<sup>1</sup> He distinguishes five relations of will, five ideas, and five systems. First, the *qualitative* relation of *the will to itself* corresponds to the Idea of *Internal Freedom*, and this idea, applied to a multitude of beings possessing will, gives rise to the System of *Animate Society*; secondly, the *quantitative* relation of *will to itself* corresponds to the Idea of *Perfection*, and this idea becomes when applied to animate society a System of *Culture*, which manifests itself in the effort towards the greatest possible perfection of all individual powers; thirdly, we have the *ideated* relation of *one's own will to that of another*, the Idea of *Benevolence*, and the System of *Administration*, which seeks the greatest possible welfare of all; fourthly, there is the *actual* relation of *two wills to a single object*, which both desire, the Idea of *Law*, and the System of *Legal Society*, which settles all conflicts; fifthly and lastly, there is the relation of will to a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Allgemeine praktische Philosophie*, Works, vol. viii.; and *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, sect. iii., Works, vol. i.

*completed action*, the Idea of *Retribution*, and the System of *Rewards and Penalties*.

The intimate relation between ethics and the Philosophy of Law, which Herbart endeavours to establish in these speculations, has given his practical philosophy many adherents in juristic circles.<sup>1</sup> But the weakness of his ethical system lies in its formalism, which is the defect of the Herbartian æsthetics in general. In æsthetics proper it is, perhaps, less noticeable than in ethics. The formal relations of a work of art are always co-determining factors of beauty, though often factors of inferior importance. But the formal relations of the will are in themselves objects neither of moral approbation nor disapprobation; within one and the same relation we may have that which deserves disapprobation, that which merits approbation, or even that which is wholly indifferent. The relations of will are thus only the most universal forms of voluntary activity, which have no connection with the ethical contents of that activity. Consequently Herbart often finds himself obliged to add to his relations of will further ethical predicates, such as good, praiseworthy, etc., which are designed to avoid indefiniteness, but are not themselves defined more closely. Herbart's ethics does not answer the question as to the *ground* of the binding force of moral laws, any more than his formal definition of the æsthetic explains the effect of beauty on the human temperament. Man, as constructed by Herbart, is a coolly calculating, ideational automaton. When his ideas are in equilibrium, he gives his approval; when they are not, he refuses it. No one not previously aware of the fact would ever guess that upon these relations of idea and will depend all the weal and woe of mankind. But while the system as a whole is so

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially GEYER, *Philosophische Einleitung in die Rechtswissenschaft*, in HOLTZENDORFF'S *Encyklopädie d. Rechtswissensch.*, Syst. Part, 4th ed. Leipzig, 1882.

unsatisfactory, it cannot be denied that some of Herbart's observations are truly illuminating. Even the careful and formal division of the various departments of moral life is a service to ethics, though the derivation of these departments from particular relations of will is forced and one-sided.

For the rest, there is one point where this philosophy is in accord with contemporary idealistic ethics; an agreement all the more remarkable from the fact that just here Herbart contradicts his own metaphysics. The latter is *individualistic*: it is more individualistic than its predecessor, the Leibnizian doctrine of monads. Leibniz had found in the universal harmony of the monads a bond of coherence which did away with the limitations of the individual being in most important respects. Herbart rejects this harmony. The single, simple being becomes aware of the existence of other beings only through the disturbances which it experiences from them; and it seems almost astonishing that the notion of self-maintenance against these disturbances, which is the basis of all ideation and feeling, should not give to Herbart's ethics an exclusively individualistic trend. Yet this is not the case: Herbart assumes in animate society a *collective will*, to which all individual wills are subordinate, and to which there corresponds, not indeed an actual, but yet an *ideal* social soul, analogous in its manifestations to individual souls in that these latter are related to it as individual ideas to their union in a *single* consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Aside from the peculiar colouring which these doctrines borrow from the metaphysical and ethical realism of the philosopher, they seem but little removed from the view of Hegel, according to which individual wills everywhere, in society, the State, and history, partake of and realise a collective will. And in still another

<sup>1</sup> *Allg. prakt. Philosophie*, book i., chap. xii.; and *Ueber einige Beziehungen zwischen Psychologie und Staatswissenschaft*, Works, vol. ii., p. 201. Cf. also *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, part ii. Works, vol. vi., pp. 31-48.

point, which marks the influence of the spirit of the age, the two philosophies resemble each other. Herbart's practical philosophy, like that of Hegel, is pervaded by an atmosphere of contemplation, remote from strife and passion. While Hegel exalted reality into the domain of eternal reason, Herbart's abstract forms, too, seem to be suspended in a region beyond the moral forces of actual life.

(b) *German Naturalism and Materialism.*

Herbart's Realism opposed speculative Idealism from the standpoint of a co-temporary system, and one which resembled Idealism in the fundamental tendency of its speculation and in other characteristics which were dependent on the spirit of the times. But a deeper and more decided opposition gradually arose out of Idealism itself: the opposition of the *younger Hegelian school* and its allied tendencies, *Naturalism* and *Materialism*. Intellectually regarded, Ludwig Feuerbach is the most important representative of this counter-current. Starting as a Hegelian, he gradually became transformed into a bitter opponent both of the method and of the foundation principles of his quondam master. He thus came to be the leader of the powerful and growing opposition to the speculative philosophy, while at the same time he gave to the ethics of modern German materialism its peculiar stamp of ideality, as compared with the earlier French and English materialism.

Feuerbach's historical relation to preceding systems is shown in the fact that the philosophy of religion is the centre of his theory. He almost reminds one of Krause in this respect. But while Krause transformed the whole of philosophy into theosophy, Feuerbach reduces all metaphysics, psychology and ethics to an occult theology, and then proceeds to show that the true essence of theology is *anthropology*. He identifies the gods with the wishes of

men, and regards man's striving for happiness as the root of all morality. This striving, again, is itself intimately connected with man's sensuous nature, so that the supposition of a spirit independent of sense, or of spiritual ends which are not also sensuous ends, is an unreal abstraction. Hence the will is no abstract and universal entity, transcending the separate acts of will; it is concrete willing, temporally and sensuously conditioned.<sup>1</sup> The will has no law which is hostile to the sensuous impulses; its highest law is no other than the most powerful of all impulses, the impulse to seek happiness. "That which hinders my impulse towards happiness, that which gainsays in any way my love for property or self, that must not and cannot be."<sup>2</sup> But it is not an egoistic ethics which Feuerbach derives from this principle of self-love. He himself points out that the fundamental difference between German and French materialism lies just at this point. While the latter had its origin in the Revolution, the former grew out of the *Reformation*, which first proved the truth of the saying 'God is love.' For it regarded the divine love not as *actus purus*, after the fashion of mediæval scholasticism, but as true love, *i.e.*, "love moved by the actual material sorrows of humanity."<sup>3</sup> But the root of this love is self-love. Just as an immaterial spirit is an empty creation of thought, so there is no such thing as a subject without an object, no I without a Thou, no love of self without a love of one's neighbour. This natural coherence finds its most direct expression in the relation of the sexes. Further, Feuerbach thinks that the true contents of the Christian dogma of the Trinity may be stated as follows. The unity of the subject is figuratively resolved into a duality; over against God the Father as self-existent Intelligence, we have the Son

<sup>1</sup> *Gottheit, Freiheit, und Unsterblichkeit*. Works, x., pp. 50 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

as Love, "diverse as regards personality, identical as regards essence." This identity is expressed by an unnecessary hypostasising of the relation under the form of the Holy Ghost. The Catholic cult of Mary, again, is a proof that love for woman is the basis of universal love. Feuerbach, of course, thinks that the reality of these religious conceptions is conditioned on their meeting an unsatisfied need. As Protestantism set aside the Mother of God, "that it might in her stead take earthly woman into its heart," so the man who recognises no life other than that of the senses as real will give up Father and Son also. For "he alone needs heavenly parents who has none on earth."<sup>1</sup>

In this way Feuerbach supplements the principle of self-love, which had obtained complete predominance in French materialism, by borrowing the notion of sympathy from the emotional ethics. His proof of their union, however, despite his sweeping rejection of the unpsychological theories of will held by the speculative philosophy, must undoubtedly be termed dialectical rather than psychological. Similarly, his anthropopathic conception of religious ideas is something between a symbolic interpretation and a psychological explanation. Yet more striking than this lack of psychological depth is the total absence of any epistemological basis to the system. In this Hegel's influence is still apparent. Here, too, Feuerbach is a prototype of the materialism of to-day. Despite his insistence on the doctrine that the individual personality is incomplete without the influence of others, his theory never transcends the limits of the *individual*. Indeed, he regards man's relations to his fellow-men as narrowed within the bounds of direct personal intercourse. The allied movements of thought which were then prevalent in England and France had advanced far beyond Feuerbach in this respect.

<sup>1</sup> *The Essence of Christianity*, tr. by Marian Evans, p. 73.

(c) *Utilitarianism and Positivism in England and France.*

While the development of modern ethical theory in England proceeds from the empiricism and utilitarianism of the school of Locke, it is influenced also by the Scottish philosophy of the preceding period, that of Hume and Adam Smith, and hence allows a certain importance to the element of feeling, though Locke's standpoint of reflection is still the prevailing attitude. In *one* point alone does the new ethics advance beyond this standpoint: it ascribes the most fundamental importance to the *common welfare*. This tendency towards universalism marks a return to the founder of English ethics, to Bacon; while at the same time the new theory, at least as regards its conception of the moral *end*, forsakes the path hitherto followed by empiricism. For it considers this end as, to a certain extent, *ideal*, to be realised only in the future. This looking towards the future gradually prepares the way for an evolutionary ethics, wherein we find much that resembles the earlier philosophy of the German Enlightenment, much even that shows an affinity with modern German Idealism. From the latter, however, it is distinguished not only by its wholly empirical treatment of the moral motive, but also by its realistic conception of the end. Since by society it means nothing other than the sum total of individuals, its conception of the *common welfare* always coincides with that of the welfare of all, or of the majority of individuals. Its universalism thus maintains an individualistic basis.

The works of *Jeremy Bentham*<sup>1</sup> are the pioneers in this movement. Bentham, like Bacon before him, regards

<sup>1</sup> *Oeuvres de J. Bentham*, Bruxelles, 1829, vols. i.-iii. Therein especially: "Traité de législation," par E. Dumont, "Principes," in vol. i., and "Théorie des peines et des récompenses," in vol. ii. Both these works are independent productions, not translations.

politics and jurisprudence as of the first importance. Thus he sets out with the assumption that ethics should be based on the same general principle as legislation, and hence the conception of the *common welfare* at once occupies the centre of ethical interest. But while Bacon left this conception indefinite, Bentham defines it as "the greatest possible welfare of the greatest possible number," or, as he more briefly expresses it, "the maximum of happiness." Now there is something vague about this greatest possible good of the greatest possible number. Aside from the fact that the quantity of the universal welfare is thereby obviously made dependent on the conditions of existence, which are by their very nature subject to change, the general question arises as to whether in measuring the maximum of happiness the *intensity* of the pleasure or its *extensive* distribution is of more importance; whether, that is to say, it is better for a small number to enjoy a high degree of happiness, or for a greater number to have a relatively lower degree of happiness.

Bentham seeks to solve this problem by first investigating the principal forms of pleasure and pain, starting with the simple joys of the senses, and ending with the more complex enjoyments which are furnished by our relations to other men and by social life. The result of this investigation goes to show that the joys of *wealth* assume a central position, inasmuch as wealth furnishes the means whereby we may obtain the other forms of enjoyment, such as the pleasures of sense, of independence, power, benevolence, etc. Thus legislation, besides making possible the maintenance of individual existence, must assure to the citizens, not only security and equality, but above all prosperity. By reason of the important place which prosperity occupies in the system of goods, in that it is not so much a good in itself as a means to the attainment of goods, the question as to the relation between intensity and extensity of welfare



reduces itself to this form: Is the common welfare greater when a few people enjoy great prosperity, or when many people enjoy moderate prosperity? Bentham answers the question in a manner that recalls Daniel Bernoulli's *mensura sortis*. The latter had observed in the matter of gambling that the increase of satisfaction produced by the winning of a given sum is inversely proportional to the amount already possessed. Bentham deduces the following more general, but more indefinite argument. To every quantity of riches there corresponds a quantity of happiness; therefore, of two individuals with unequal possessions, other things being equal, the richer will always be the happier, but the rich man's surplus of happiness will not equal his surplus of riches. Thus, the more the ratio of the possessions owned by the citizens of a commonwealth approaches unity, the greater the sum of happiness. This conclusion would lead directly to communism, if another consideration did not intervene. The State has to assure, not only prosperity and equality to its citizens, but also *security*; indeed, security is the higher good, for when it is in danger all other goods are endangered too. But nothing is more counter to the principle of security than an infringement of private property. Thus Bentham reaches the remarkable conclusion, which he naturally does not express, that the "maximum of happiness" required by his moral principle is unattainable, because an equal distribution of property, which is a necessary condition thereto, can never be carried out on account of the political dangers involved.

Although Bentham does not consciously identify happiness with sense-pleasure in the spirit of hedonism, his views show a tendency in that direction by reason of the importance he ascribes to material possessions. However much he may dwell on the fact that wealth is the means through which we obtain spiritual as well as sensuous pleasures, there

is no doubt that the former are less immediately dependent on material wealth than the latter. This narrow view of external goods as the means for the production of internal goods is responsible, too, for the *utilitarian* character of Bentham's thought. The useful exists not for its own sake but for the objects it serves. In this sense wealth is *par excellence* useful. In the same way, the other enjoyments which make up the sum of human happiness, such as skill, friendship, power, benevolence, etc., reciprocally aid each other.

Unlike Hume and Smith, Bentham gave but little attention to the psychological motives of morality. His treatment here occupies a middle position between the emotional and intellectual ethics of his predecessors. Pleasure and pain are for him not merely the *end* of moral action, as the principle of the maximum of happiness indicates; they are its *motives*. "They alone determine both what we *shall* do and what we *ought* to do." As motives, however, they enter the service of *reason*, which indicates the right way whereby through our acts and through a properly ordered legislation not only our own happiness, but that of our fellow-men may be furthered. Reason is here guided partly by *physical* influences, in that we experience useful and harmful effects on our own bodies; partly by *political* influences, where existing legislation shows us the right path; partly, in fine, by *social* and *religious* sanctions in the form of public opinion and religious requirements. In these sanctions of the principle of utility we have a repetition of the corresponding distinctions made by Locke, save that Bentham ascribes a still greater relative importance to the natural law which every man finds in his own reason. Locke had made an exception at least of the requirements of religion; but Bentham regards all the sanctions as having their source in rational deliberation. He thus makes the intellectual

motives predominate. In accordance with this view, when he is investigating the motives of altruistic action, he admits the importance not only of benevolence, but of the ambition for a good reputation, the desire to win friends, and to conform to the precepts of religion. And with Hobbes and Locke he answers the question as to how we are enabled to prefer the common welfare to our own, by saying that while originally egoism was the only motive impelling mankind, deliberation soon taught the individual that it was beneficial to *appear* before the world as careless of his own interests. The mere appearance, however, involves the danger of being discovered as an impostor; and so it finally proves most advantageous actually to possess the character which one formerly appeared to have. This derivation of altruism makes one think of the theories of Mandeville and Helvetius. At the same time we can see how important a part reflection still plays in the theory, when we consider what a complex chain of reasoning is required to reach the conclusion that it is for one's own interest to further the common welfare, and that to do so unselfishly is the very best way of serving one's own interest.

Bentham's moral philosophy certainly does not owe its lasting influence to this unimportant and unoriginal discussion of the psychological motives of morality. If we except a few isolated observations which show the clear-sightedness of this man to whom the legislation of his country owed so much, his influence is due chiefly to his happy formulation of the principle of the maximum of happiness. Henceforth social utilitarianism had a shibboleth which set a practical limit to the impossible demand for the equal happiness of all, and which was at the same time sufficiently vague to be combined with the most diverse social and political views.

As regards their fundamental tendency, Bentham's utili-

tarianism and *Auguste Comte's* Positivism are in complete agreement. Comte too bases the happiness of the individual on the state of civil society ; and maintains that the complicated conditions which secure social equilibrium allow only of a relative, never of an absolute maximum of happiness. But his conception of society supplements Bentham's in an important particular. Bentham, in his intellectual view of the moral motive, as in his unhistorical conception of the State and society, belongs wholly to the eighteenth century. Comte's philosophy, on the other hand, is as full of the idea of historical development as that of Hegel. But while with Hegel the schema of the dialectical method had to be applied in order to bring the course of history under the rules of universal reason, Comte comprehended the past and prescribed rules for the present and future by the help of an abstraction which had, perhaps, more of an empirical basis than Hegel's method, but was for that very reason less adequate. His "Law of the Three Stages," according to which humanity is governed first by theological ideas, then by metaphysical ideas, lastly and definitively by positive ideas derived from the actual world alone, not only furnishes him with an outline in which to depict the development of the scientific spirit under an aspect grand despite its incompleteness, but serves as a standard by which to pass judgment upon political history and the social condition of various peoples.<sup>1</sup> Here, of course, the important thing is not so much the original law as the auxiliary hypothesis that to the theological stage there corresponds the warlike state of culture, and to the positive stage the industrial period, while the metaphysical stage, which, intellectually regarded, is intermediate between mythology and science, represents, socially regarded, a period of transition. This historico-philosophical standpoint enables Comte to estimate the relative importance

<sup>1</sup> *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, vol. i., lesson 1; vol iv., lesson 51.

of the various characteristics of past stages of civilisation, such as slavery among the ancients or the hierarchy of the mediæval church, and to point out their functions in the development of culture. Unfortunately, however, Comte's philosophy of history suffers, perhaps, more than any similar system from an ambition to comprehend the final goal of history. As the positive and final stage of science lies for Comte wholly within the horizon of French mathematics and mathematical science in the first decade of our century, so the advancement of industry during this period furnishes him with a standard whereby he measures the highest stage of social and political development, which is to follow immediately. A division of labour in which everyone is assigned an activity suited to his capacities; a mastery of nature constantly becoming more complete through the increase of intellectual and physical forces attained by such a division; these constitute for Comte the ultimate end of the social organisation. The final task of government is to combine individual forces to this universal object, to avoid division and harmful friction among them. *Ordre et Progrès* he declares to be respectively the basis and the aim of society, and thus his views are in complete opposition to the revolutionary theories of society current in the preceding century.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, progress with him is not merely advancement of the welfare of the individual or of the greatest number, as with contemporary Utilitarianism. For 'society,' which he identifies with the State after the manner of the *Contrat social*, is more than the sum of individuals. Supreme above individuals, and guided by a government which orders and regulates work and education, it is that which directs all individual forces to the service of the highest ends of humanity, mastery of nature and knowledge of the laws of phenomena.<sup>2</sup> Thus the ideal of the positive age, whose

<sup>1</sup> *Philos. Pos.*, vol. vi., lesson 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, lesson 60.

dawn Comte heralds, makes the last and highest goal of human effort to consist not merely in a bountiful supply of material goods, but in the satisfaction of intellectual interest, which wisely restricts itself to facts and their connection.

But here a third principle makes its appearance. By the side of order and progress we have *love*; nay, love is made supreme over the other two, since, according to Comte, it is the ruling motive of all social forces directed towards order and progress. *L'amour pour principe, l'ordre pour base, et le progrès pour but!*<sup>1</sup> While this formula, in which he sums up the fundamental ideas of his theory, belongs to a later, and, in many respects, altered form of the doctrine, it may yet be regarded as a suitable expression even of the earlier stages of Positivism, since it distinctly indicates the place which is assigned from the outset to the sympathetic feelings. Here Comte shows an affinity for the partisans of the emotional ethics. Instead of sympathy, however, he substitutes 'altruism.' The word, since adopted into the vocabulary of ethics, is his own invention. Now sympathy is the narrower, altruism the broader concept, including not only every sort of fellow-feeling, but also active devotion to the service of others. Accordingly, the essential problem of moral development consists for Comte in the gradual control of egoism, originally the more powerful impulse, by altruism. But a victory over egoistic instincts would be impossible if society consisted merely of *individuals*. In that case not only would a strife of all against all be the natural condition of affairs, but it would be impossible to see how man could ever get out of such a condition. Even in a state of nature, however, man lives in couples. Not the individual, then, but the *family* is the social unit. Here the instinct of sympathy is first satisfied and intensified, and thus the

<sup>1</sup> *Catéchisme Positiviste*, p. 57.

family forms the first stage of social life, whose further development is motived by the necessity of co-operation and by the gradual division of labour. Similarity of occupation at first strengthens the social feelings, but in so doing leads to a division between men of different callings: which division it is the task of government, watching over the common interests of society, to reconcile. The more, therefore, that sympathy with the government increases, the more the social feelings grow and broaden. Thus, finally, the complete suppression of egoism, the 'life for others,' is regarded as the supreme duty of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, it is these thoughts which give rise to the later transformations in Comte's views. Little by little his glorification of abstract mathematical method and of the practical intelligence of the industrial spirit is supplemented by a kind of mystical religious enthusiasm, and thus *love* comes to play a far higher rôle than the one assigned to it in the original altruistic theory,—that of a moral motive; it becomes the essential contents of a religion of humanity, whose god is humanity, and whose cult consists in actions which are a symbolic manifestation of universal love for man. The picture which Comte draws of man's future, on the basis of these ideas, is that of a Utopia bearing a strong resemblance to the Platonic Republic in the position which it assigns to the priesthood, who are to have supervision over all the relations of life; but little scope being left for individual freedom in the society of the future. On the other hand, the anthropological interpretation which this religion of the future gives to all previous religious conceptions, especially Christian dogmas, remind one of *Feuerbach*, like the importance which Positivism even in its first period ascribed to the family as a

<sup>1</sup> *Philos. Pos.*, vol. iv., lesson 50.

factor in moral life. But while Feuerbach set out with religio-philosophical ideas, which he later completely resolved into practical love for mankind, Comte passed from a half-historical, half-utilitarian theory of society to a wholly serious religion of humanity, which he sought to adorn with ceremonial forms partly invented by himself, and partly borrowed from the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup>

Comte's most important disciples did not adhere to his later views. They held by the earlier form of the positivistic system, and regarded the construction of the 'positive religion' as an aberration on the philosopher's part. The close resemblance, however, between the original system and the views of social utilitarianism, as regards their definition of the moral end, suggested the thought of supplementing Bentham by Comte at this point, of adding to the former's idea of the end the latter's theory of development and his profounder psychological analysis of motives, whose disfigurement by an absurd use of phrenology was only external. The chief representative of this intermediate position between English Utilitarianism and French Positivism is *John Stuart Mill*, who termed himself a disciple of Comte and of Bentham.

Mill's system is an improvement on the utilitarianism of his predecessors, chiefly as regards *two* points. First, he emphasises more forcibly than Bentham does the different values of different kinds of pleasure, and the greatly superior ethical value of intellectual enjoyments. Similarly, he avoids Bentham's over-estimation of external possessions, and abandons

<sup>1</sup> *Système de Politique Positive*, t. iv. The analogy between Feuerbach and Comte, as regards the first period of Positivism, has been already pointed out by Fr. Jodl (*Geschichte d. Ethik in d. neuen Philosophie*, ii., pp. 270 f.). I cannot agree with the view maintained in this work, which otherwise contains much that is excellent, to the effect that Feuerbach, Comte and John Stuart Mill are to be regarded as representing three parallel stages of ethical development in Germany, France and England.



those arguments of Bentham's which are based on the equality of all pleasures. As a natural consequence, his ethics meets a new difficulty. That is, the question arises as to what shall mark the distinction between the ethically higher and ethically lower pleasures. Mill can think of no other answer than an appeal to the majority. Of two goods, that one which the majority of men strive after is in reality preferable. Thus 'public opinion,' first introduced by Locke as one of the sanctions of the moral law, is regarded by Mill as its determining factor.

The second point in which Mill has effected an improvement on Bentham's theory concerns the relation between the moral motive and the moral end. His estimate of the relative value of different goods assumes rational insight to be indispensable for the determination of the end, although, in opposition to the intuitive systems, he emphasises the fact that every form of pleasure, including sensuous pleasure, has a relative justification; and hence regards no happiness as complete that is disturbed by any admixture of pain. In treating of the moral motive, on the other hand, he seeks to do justice to the importance of the *feeling* element by assuming, with Comte, social feelings that instinctively impel us to do right without requiring deliberation concerning the causes and effects of our action in every case. For Mill, however, feeling not only anticipates the result of deliberation, but itself springs from previous deliberation, either on our own part, or on that of others whose influence reaches us through example and precept. Hence, we need not always have a clear perception of what is useful in order to do it; although our action will naturally be more perfect if it proceeds from insight as well as instinct. Thus Mill tries to show that all other moral systems—intuitive and theological—are unconsciously based on the principle of utility, since all practical morality necessarily reduces itself in the

last instance to this principle, whether it has been admitted as a motive or not.

The supposition that we may act under the influence of motives without being conscious of them obviously meets with considerable difficulty, so long as one assumes with Mill that in each individual consciousness the process by which motives become organised and transformed into instincts must take place anew. The difficulty is greatly lessened, on the other hand, if we suppose a coherence of individuals by virtue of which the acquisitions of earlier generations may be transmitted, at least in germ, to their successors. Thus utilitarianism leads to *evolutionism*, to a *subjective* evolutionism in fact, since moral development is thus regarded as fulfilling itself within the individual consciousness. We have here the counterpart of the *objective evolutionism* of Hegel and Comte, for which the development of morality coincided with intellectual development in general.

(d) *Utilitarian Ethics as Influenced by the Theory of Evolution.*

The influence of *Darwin's* theory of descent, while it affected scientific opinion far beyond the sphere of the natural sciences, was especially immediate in the field of ethics, for there it was supported by the long familiar facts of moral development. At the same time, of course, Darwin himself was influenced by contemporary utilitarianism. But the gist of his theory of evolution lies in the doctrine that qualities accidentally arising in the struggle for existence, which are *useful* to the species affected, are preserved and strengthened. Among the qualities thus developed by natural selection are the *social instincts*.<sup>1</sup> Now man is undoubtedly a social animal, distinguished from the lower animals only by his capacity for reflection. Even his simian

<sup>1</sup> DARWIN, *Descent of Man*, vol. i., chap. iv.

ancestors, apparently, possessed the same instincts. But by the general laws of heredity the more stable instincts must gradually overcome the less stable; and those instincts which are useful to the species are more stable than those which serve merely for self-preservation. Hence we have in all gregarious animals the disposition to morality. A social animal, however, becomes transformed into a *moral* animal when he is able to compare his past and future actions or motives, and thus to approve or disapprove. Morality is, in a single word, the social instinct controlled by intelligence. The contents of all moral laws, therefore, is determined by the needs of the species; and the 'general welfare' is nothing else but the sum of the means "whereby the greatest possible number of individuals may exist in full vigour and health." If human beings were reared under precisely the same conditions as bees, there could scarcely be a doubt "that our unmarried females would, like the worker bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters."<sup>1</sup> It would, of course, be unfair to judge the ethical significance of Darwin's views by such statements as these, which proceed rather from the undue stress laid upon the utility of development than from the principle of development itself. The validity of this principle for the human race, and the possibility of its ethical application, in the form advanced by Darwin of a gradual perfecting of individual and species in the struggle for existence, cannot be gainsaid.

*Herbert Spencer* has sought to apply this form of evolutionism to moral philosophy yet more thoroughly than Darwin, and to a large extent independently of him. Spencer had already conceived and expressed the thought of the development theory before Darwin's pioneer works appeared. The latter, however, were not without influence

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. i., pp. 185, 152.

on the working out of his theory. This is especially the case with his ethics, the part of his system which Spencer treated of last.<sup>1</sup>

Spencer's ethical views are governed by the concepts of adaptation and heredity. In accordance with the principle of adaptation, he too regards the moral as identical with the useful, and the latter as identical with that which is adapted to existing conditions of human life. Since these conditions are variable, moral ideas are in a state of continual flux; and there is no such thing as absolute moral laws, valid for all times, though it is not denied that certain actions have always been considered harmful and certain others beneficial; just as the physical organism in all stages of its development maintains a constant relation to certain general conditions of existence. Spencer, like Darwin before him, makes a great point of the relativity of moral ideas, and therefore recognises no specific difference between morality and other forms of utility. He grants, it is true, that in general the more useful and hence the more moral course is to subordinate the pleasures of the moment, even when they seem greater, to those which come later but are more lasting. But he expressly states that this holds good only for the present condition of the human race, and that even here there are exceptions.

While the opinions which he bases on the idea of useful adaptation for the most part follow the track of the older utilitarianism, a new element is added in the arguments to which he is led through the principle of heredity, and in which at the same time he completes the rather indefinite suggestions of Darwin. One of the chief difficulties encountered by Bentham's utilitarianism was to explain how, under the guidance of original pleasure and pain, impulses in themselves egoistic, the common welfare could

<sup>1</sup> *The Data of Ethics*. London, 1879.

become a motive of action. Spencer solves this difficulty by transferring it from individual to racial development, where, of course, since an innumerable series of generations is available, it becomes distinctly less. According to Spencer, certain fundamental moral feelings and intuitions have been developed in the human race, and are in the act of further development. They are the result of experiences of utility, which in the course of evolution have been accumulated, organised, and, through their incorporation into the nervous system, inherited together with its tendencies. Moral tendencies are thus transmitted as physical dispositions, but they become actualised under the form of moral ideas in us. In this way Spencer revives on a materialistic basis the old intellectualism maintained by Cudworth and opposed by Locke. Moral ideas, though in a crude and indefinite form, are innate in us. But they are not, as the Cartesians assumed, directly implanted by God in our souls; they have been developed by the experience of our ancestors and transmitted to us in the disposition of our nervous system. Besides the hypothesis, shared by other physiologists and psychologists, that the nerve-cells of the brain are the permanent representatives of ideas, Spencer's theory involves the further assumption of a transmission of the cells, together with the ideas to which they belong, from one generation to the next.

These views of Spencer's concerning the basis of individual moral development are supplemented by the theory of *social forms* presented in his *Sociology*.<sup>1</sup> As the development of the individual refers back to that of the race, so the organisation of society must be thought of as analogous to the individual organism. Especially in its formation and in the growth of the social structures which compose it, do we find an integration of ultimate organic units, like that

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Sociology*. Cf. esp. vol. ii., chaps. i.-xii., and vol. iii., chap. xix.

upon which the growth of the single organism is based. Moreover, the opposing forces of disintegration, by which existing combinations tend to fall apart again, play an important rôle here. The divisions of political authority, legislative, executive and judicial, as well as the distinctions of class and guild, are regarded by Spencer as examples of this differentiation. But its chief determining influence seems to him to be the distinction between the two stages of historical development, warlike and industrial, which will probably coexist for some time to come; though ultimately, as Spencer, like Comte, believes, the industrial spirit will be supreme. While the military stage of civilisation demands enforced co-operation of the parts of the whole, and thus a firmer and simpler union, the government of the industrial system will be the result of the *voluntary* co-operation of individuals. Since the government cannot be administered by all, representatives freely elected even to the highest government positions are to be entrusted with the carrying on of public affairs. Thus, on the basis of an organic theory of the State, and in opposition to the conclusions which he elsewhere deduces from this very theory, Spencer's philosophy of history leads him to a strongly individualistic conception of the future structure of society. This explains why on certain practical questions Spencer assumes a position corresponding to that of the egoistic utilitarianism of eighteenth century politics. It seems to him frankly absurd to abandon the simple principle "that every man ought to follow the aim of his life independently, and should be restricted only by the limitations imposed by the equal right of his fellow-men."<sup>1</sup>

Besides this special outgrowth of the theory of evolution it has found other ethical applications, which have aimed

<sup>1</sup> *From Freedom to Bondage*. Essays, vol. iii., p. 445. *Justice*, part iv. of the *Principles of Ethics*. London, 1891.

to avoid the auxiliary physiological hypotheses introduced by Spencer. Thus *Leslie Stephen*<sup>1</sup> seeks to abandon all hypotheses, and to investigate only the moral facts themselves. Since these, however, show that the conception of morality is fluctuating and dependent on historical and social conditions, there is a sufficient warrant for the evolutionary standpoint. Mr. Stephen rejects the customary utilitarianism of the evolutionary ethics, because the concept of utility is ambiguous and varies with the state of society; and because the formula, "greatest happiness of the greatest number," resolves society into an atomistic multitude of similar individuals, instead of conceiving it as an organic whole. Moreover, utility is not ordinarily the immediate end of moral action, though it may be its final result. The origin of morality lies rather in the feelings, especially in *sympathy*, that ultimate source of our altruistic inclinations, which is based on the fact that we put ourselves in another's place. Since through sympathy we become capable of acting for others, we share in the organisation of society, which in its turn reacts upon the individual and thus gradually forms the *moral law* out of those modes of conduct which further the welfare of society in its existing state. Morality is to society what health is to the body; and since the social organism is continually developing, we cannot speak of a morality that is constant under all conditions any more than of an invariable diet for all ages and constitutions.

There is no mistaking the fact that these views approach more closely to objective evolutionism and Comte's theory of society than to Herbert Spencer's strongly individualistic ethics. In many ways the English moral philosophy of to-day betrays an effort to reconcile the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, not only with the principles of evolution,

<sup>1</sup> LESLIE STEPHEN, *The Science of Ethics*. London, 1882.

but also with earlier tendencies, especially those of emotional and intuitional ethics.<sup>1</sup>

A description of the ethical currents and tendencies in the present time, at which we have now arrived, would fall outside the scope of this account of the historical development of ethical philosophy. If the signs of the times do not deceive us, our age bears here as in other respects the marks of an epoch of transition, in which the variously developed tendencies of the past are still influential and are gradually assuming new forms, destined later to give complete expression to the intellectual life of the present. In contemporary ethics the social utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, more or less flavoured by the evolutionary doctrine of Darwin and Spencer, is the predominant tendency. That it will be permanent, or that, as many of its adherents seem to think, it is the last word of our consciousness concerning the value and meaning of life, I refuse to believe. It will be the task of the following examination to justify this opposition to a prevailing philosophical tendency. To facilitate the task, however, it seems desirable to subject the ethical views, whose historical development we have just considered, to a critical investigation with reference to their systematic coherence and their ultimate validity.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially H. SIDGWICK, *The Methods of Ethics*, 3rd ed., London, 1884.



## CHAPTER IV.

### GENERAL CRITICISM OF ETHICAL SYSTEMS.

#### I. CLASSIFICATION OF ETHICAL SYSTEMS.

##### (a) *General Standpoints for such a Classification.*

THERE are *two* possible principles upon which a general classification of systems of moral philosophy may be made. Ethical systems may be distinguished (1) as regards the *motives* which they assume for moral action, and (2) as regards the *ends* which they set before it. The two divisions cross, since, generally speaking, every system contains both a theory of the end and a theory of the motive. It not infrequently happens, however, that these theories coincide, for many moralists regard the end and the motive as one and the same. Moreover, there are many systems under each head which are *eclectic* in character, and recognise several different motives and ends as equally valid. It is noteworthy, however, that manifold as are the systems which have been developed in the course of the history of ethics, it is impossible to base any classification upon the concept of *law*, though one might have supposed it well fitted for such a purpose. Not that certain characteristic differences in the formulation of moral laws are lacking. But these differences are in general quite unessential, and closer examination shows the material contents of most so-called moral laws to be practically identical. Where there are differences, they are such as show themselves far more distinctly in the motives,

and especially in the ends assumed. This fact suggests the consoling thought that the division of opinion is theoretical and not practical. As a rule, men agree on the question as to *what* is moral ; opinions are divided only as to *why* it is so.

Of the two classifications just mentioned, the more important is the one based on *ends* ; for it is more important, practically speaking at least, to know what the consequences of our actions are to be than what motive impels us to them. Hence the former question has been the most frequent subject of dispute, and in many cases the only one, since almost all the ancient philosophers and many, at least, of the moderns have regarded motive and end as identical, the motive being nothing but the end anticipated in idea. Investigation of moral facts has shown us that this opinion is in general erroneous. The end *may* coincide with the motive, but does not *necessarily* do so ; hence in classifying ethical systems we should keep the two principles of division distinct. Since, however, the classification according to ends is the more important, and since one's theory of the end usually determines one's theory of the motive, we shall base the following critique of systems of morals on the ends which they assume, and use their theories of the moral motive as a principle of subdivision.

(b) *Classification according to Motives.*

Here we have to distinguish three fundamental forms only : the ethics of *feeling*, the ethics of *understanding* and the ethics of *reason*. The ethics of feeling derives morality from feelings and emotions ; that of the understanding from reflection ; that of the reason either from rational insight which passes the limits of reflection, but remains a product of experience, or from rational intuition prior to all experience. The ethics of feeling is always based on the

assumption of original dispositions which admit of no further explanation; the ethics of the understanding regards the power of reflection as a faculty awakened and developed by experience; the ethics of reason, finally, sees in reason an innate power whose ethical function rests either on an empirically developed insight into the most general ends of human action or on innate ideas. Hence, if we classify all systems according as they hold moral motives to be innate or developed by experience, we shall get the following schema :—

Ethical Intuitionism.		Ethical Empiricism.	
Ethics of Feeling.	Ethics of the Reason.	Ethics of the Understanding.	

The ethics of feeling falls under Intuitionism, that of the understanding under Empiricism, while the ethics of reason lies between the two. Its intuitional systems have most affinity with the ethics of feeling, its empirical systems with the ethics of the understanding; for no sharp line can be drawn between innate moral ideas and innate feelings and impulses, while the empiricism of the ethics of reason is distinguished from that of the ethics of the understanding chiefly in the fact that the former recognises qualitative differences in human and animal springs of action, where the latter sees only quantitative differences. The ethics of the understanding regards man with his moral impulses as belonging wholly to the sense world. For the ethics of reason, he is at the same time citizen of a supersensuous world, especially as regards the moral end which his insight discovers in his own being. Hence it is only for the ethics of reason that morality is *specifically human*. The ethics of feeling finds the *beginnings* of ethics in the souls of lower animals, and the ethics of the understanding finds at least the *germ* of morality there.

In spite of the differences between these three ethical

standpoints, they all recognise the same actions, with very few exceptions, as moral. But each has a different standard for the worth of actions: a man who saves the life of his fellow acts morally according to the ethics of *feeling*, because he exercises sympathy; according to the ethics of the *understanding*, either because he follows the correct principle that only by so doing can he himself claim aid in a similar emergency, or because he says to himself that the civil law or the religious law demands such conduct, and must be obeyed for the sake of universal or individual welfare. The ethics of *reason* either maintains that furthering the welfare of others as of oneself is a duty which follows from the concept of man as a rational being; or it believes in an immediate, internal voice of duty, requiring a man to endanger his own safety for that of others.

(c) *Classification according to Ends.*

There are two views possible regarding the ends of moral action. They may be considered as having their source not in man's own nature, but in an external command; or they may be regarded as peculiar to man himself, and arising from original dispositions and the natural conditions of development. Ethical systems of the first class may be called *authoritative* or *heteronomous*; those of the second class *autonomous*. Since the distinction between the two concerns, not the *contents* of the moral end, but only the *way* in which it is given, the authoritative systems, when they give any account of contents at all, usually agree with some one or other of the autonomous systems on this point. But they frequently avoid stating the contents of the moral end, appealing simply to the principle of obedience which they make so important. The moral law must be followed because it is given by a higher authority, and without any question as to its end. Only in the case of autonomous

theories, therefore, can we get a systematic classification of theories according to their view of the contents of the moral end. Here we may distinguish two principal classes. The first regards moral action as directed towards goods which can be *directly realised*, i.e., such as can be attained by the agent himself, his fellow-men, or both. The other sees in moral action an integral part of a *moral development*. The real, or at least the ultimate end of every moral act, is not its immediate effect, but the final goal of this development. Since the directly realisable goods constitute what we call *means to happiness* [Glücksgüter], using the expression to include a wide and varied connotation—and since the object of these goods is to produce *pleasure*, the concept of pleasure including every possible form of agreeable feeling, purely intellectual as well as physical, we may call the systems of the first class *eudæmonistic*, and those of the second *evolutionary*.

Each of these classes may be again divided into an *individual* and a *universal* tendency. *Individual eudæmonism*, or *egoism*, regards individual happiness as the end of action. *Universal eudæmonism* or *utilitarianism* finds the end in the welfare of all. *Individual evolutionism* holds that the ultimate purpose of morality lies in *perfection of the individual*; *universal evolutionism* makes it consist in the *spiritual development of mankind*, as empirically represented by its historical progress. We thus obtain the following classification :—

### I. *Authoritative Ethical Systems.*

These may be subdivided into *politically* and *religiously heteronomous* systems. They either avoid taking any account of ends, or affiliate with some one of the autonomous systems as regards the question of ends.

## II. *Autonomous Ethical Systems.*

### (1) *Eudæmonism*, under the form of

- (a) Individual Eudæmonism or Egoism ;
- (b) Universal Eudæmonism or Utilitarianism.

### (2) *Evolutionism*, under the form of

- (a) Individual Evolutionism ;
- (b) Universal Evolutionism.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. AUTHORITATIVE ETHICAL SYSTEMS.

The error of these systems is that they *reverse the true causal relation in ethics*. The *products* of the moral consciousness are made its *causes*. This error is most apparent in the *political* form of heteronomy. In view of the historical conditions under which political institutions have developed, there can be no doubt that civic legislation, particularly as it bears on the citizen's conduct of life, is itself under the influence of the moral consciousness. In the case of *religious* heteronomy the reversal is perhaps not so apparent, because the origin of religious ideas goes back to a time much earlier than that of developed political legislation. Then, too, moral ideas have been as a matter of fact so interwoven with religious ideas from the very outset, that we cannot hope to establish the priority of either. But just because the race-consciousness reflects its moral life in its mythological ideas, the gods themselves are made the originators of the moral law,—a thought which becomes still more firmly rooted through the development of the idea of retribution.

<sup>1</sup> The only classification I know of which partially agrees with this is that of Sidgwick (*Methods of Ethics*, Introd. § 4). He distinguishes five systems: individual and universal Evolutionism, individual and universal Hedonism, and Intuitionism. He thus takes no account of heteronomous systems; while Intuitionism is based on a principle of division heterogeneous to that of the other systems.

When the conception, existing in the universal consciousness, of the relation between morality and religion passed over into science, the latter naturally speculated concerning the *ground* of the divine commands. There arose successively *three* theories, which illustrate the gradual transition from heteronomous to autonomous morals. According to the *first*, the moral law is moral only *because* it is a religious law. The will of God alone determines what is and what is not moral. If God had commanded otherwise, our notions of good and bad would be other than they are. This view, which was developed in scholastic nominalism and theological utilitarianism, deprives morality of all independent value by completely denying its autonomy. The *second* theory attempts to remedy this, by regarding the moral law as on the one hand of human origin, a principle of action developed by deliberation or rational insight, and as on the other hand a *religious* command imparted through revelation. The views of Locke, Leibniz, and of the theological rationalism of the last century, which followed in their footsteps, come under this head. Autonomy and heteronomy are co-ordinated, either one being placed in the foreground according to inclination; while the autonomous origin of the moral law is conceived in accordance now with the ethics of the understanding, now with that of the reason. When the latter is chosen, a way is opened for the reconciliation of these two laws, alike in their content though differing in their origin. This way is followed by the *third* and intermediary theory. The moral law, like the human reason itself, is of divine origin. It therefore does not need to be communicated from without; it may be directly created by reason, for it belongs to the class of innate truths upon which all rational knowledge is based. Such is in general the view of metaphysical ethics and of the English intellectualism influenced thereby. The theory underwent

a gradual transition to complete autonomy. While the older intellectualism regarded reason as merely the organ of divine revelation, Kant, who may be considered as the last adherent of the theory in question, shows a strong leaning towards autonomy: the inner law is the original one, and religion itself becomes "the recognition of all our duties as divine commands." This attacks the very principle of heteronomy: morality now imposes its laws on religious ideas. The way is now clear for a recognition of the true causal relation between the two.

Although by thus acknowledging the moral origin of political and religious laws as their only permanent sanction, the foundation of all the heteronomous systems has been destroyed, yet these systems must be allowed a certain practical value. They are useful because of the stress they lay on *unconditional authority*. The best way of insuring such authority to moral laws is to derive them from some external power with means of coercion, a power which decrees punishments either in this world or the next. Hence, even the *political heteronomy* of Hobbes has always retained a few adherents up to the most recent times, if only because it was supposed to furnish the sole empirical explanation for the authoritative character and the variable content of the moral law.<sup>1</sup> While there is no doubt that these systems exaggerate the variability of moral requirements, and explain their authority only by deriving them from an authority itself left unexplained, yet they certainly express a fact which is important for the development of morals. Political and religious law, while themselves the products of moral ideas, are in the earlier stages of society indispensable *means of moral education*, and perhaps within certain limits they will remain such. If man's moral intui-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g., VON KIRCHMANN, *Die Grundbegriffe des Rechts und der Moral*, pp. 48 ff.



tions are to have any binding force upon him, he must have them objectified and invested with a certain amount of power. Many people would develop only the merest rudiments of these intuitions if they did not possess the moral legacy of previous generations in the practical form of custom, law and religious life. Science, however, cannot sanction this inversion of ethical causality, whatever its practical importance. The proof that custom, law, and religion are but objectified morality obliges us to seek the origin of the latter in the human consciousness, and thus to postulate the autonomy of morals.

### 3. EUDÆMONISTIC SYSTEMS.

*Individual Eudæmonism* or *Egoism* alone has never, properly speaking, constituted a moral system. Where self-love is made the exclusive motive and sole end of human action, as with the Sophists in antiquity and Mandeville in modern English ethics, the intention is to call in question the very existence of moral laws. Even the Epicurean ethics recognised the necessity of the civil order, and thus of a regard for others; it was utilitarianism with a strong tinge of egoism. *Universal Eudæmonism* or *Utilitarianism*, on the other hand, is one of the most widely disseminated of ethical theories. According to the individual ends which it assumes for those actions which serve the common welfare, it falls into *two divisions*, *egoistic* and *altruistic* utilitarianism.

#### (a) *Egoistic Utilitarianism.*

As far back as the theory of Hobbes we find utilitarianism with egoistic motives playing an important rôle, side by side with his authoritative derivation of the moral law. Since Locke's time it has been the prevailing view in English ethics; a view from which even Hume, Bentham and Mill

did not succeed in completely freeing themselves. It may be subdivided into two forms, according to the psychological motives assumed; an ethics of *reflection*, and an ethics of *association* and *feeling*.

The *egoistic-utilitarian ethics of reflection*, represented by Hobbes and Locke, in part also by Bentham and Mill, supposes that altruistic action results from selfish considerations. But, in the first place, it is inconceivable that man should recognise the utility of altruistic action before he has ever performed such actions, and that he should ever perform them without having previously recognised their utility, if his nature is originally egoistic. Moreover, the law that actions for the common good tend at the same time to the good of the individual holds true only in a limited number of cases. The man who saves another at the sacrifice of his own life, the soldier who stands at his post when his faithfulness means certain death, these may, in some instances, be incited by the selfish desire for fame and honour. But in many other instances this motive cannot possibly have played any part worth mentioning, because the conditions of the act are such that honour and fame are not to be had from it, or because for other special reasons there would be no psychological probability in the assumption of self-seeking motives. In order to do justice to the facts, egoistic utilitarianism must grant that altruistic motives, if originally non-existent, may yet be developed. For such a development, it becomes necessary to assume certain conditions, consisting partly in processes of association and partly in feelings; and thus to pass from the ethics of reflection to the next form.

The *egoistic utilitarianism of association and feeling* was founded by Hartley, and Hume, in his explanation of objective sympathy, followed Hartley's lead. He was unable, however, to account on this basis for one of the most

important of moral attributes, justice, and was thus forced to fall back on the ethics of reflection. Adam Smith was the first to avoid this inconsistency, and did so by adding subjective to objective sympathy. This was practically abandoning all attempt to explain morality by self-love, for subjective sympathy presupposes the ultimate character of altruistic feelings. As a matter of fact, however, even in the case of objective sympathy the derivation of altruistic feeling from association is only apparent. Nothing but the introduction of logical reflection can render possible an associational explanation of how unselfish actions come to be preferred before selfish actions. By means of association we must gradually free our moral judgment from the influence of the proximity or remoteness of actions, for otherwise, as Hume says, "there must inevitably occur contradictions in our moral ideas." But since the motive of this process of elimination is purely logical, association really plays only a subordinate part. The immediate influence of every effort to free moral ideas from contradiction can be exerted only on our moral *judgment*. Its influence on our moral feelings and acts must be secondary and by way of reaction, through our endeavour to harmonise feeling and action with our moral judgment. And so we are brought back to the standpoint of reflection: it is not moral feeling, but moral judgment influenced by certain logical considerations that is the ultimate factor. The difference between this theory and the ordinary egoistic ethics of the understanding is hardly to the advantage of the former. In estimating personal interest, the latter takes account of motives which actually do exert a strong influence on our impulses and acts. But whether the desire to free ethical ideas from contradictions is in itself a sufficiently strong motive to incite men to good and deter them from evil, seems very doubtful. Probably the social consequences of an action contrary to general moral judg-

ment, its breach of respectability, the disadvantages of private vengeance or legal penalty, would be taken into consideration, and we should have simply the ethics of reflection in its ordinary form. There is no way of avoiding the difficulty except by recognising the ultimate character of the social and benevolent instincts. This would mean abandoning the false inversion of the relation between moral feeling and moral judgment, and basing the latter on the former, after the manner of Shaftesbury, who was the first to conceive the problem of moral philosophy under this aspect. Thus the transition from egoistic to altruistic utilitarianism is completed.

(b) *Altruistic Utilitarianism.*

This form of utilitarianism is decidedly superior to the egoistic form, and has gradually superseded it, so that the utilitarianism of to-day may be called an altruism preserving only a few traces of the egoistic reflection-ethics. Since we apply the term utilitarianism in general to all systems which regard the *common welfare* as the end, the altruistic principle has the primary advantage of aiming directly at this end. While egoistic utilitarianism is obliged to make an artificial derivation of the social from the egoistic instincts, with the aid of forced reflections and associations whose existence is highly questionable; altruistic utilitarianism, on the other hand, argues from the existence of benevolent actions to the existence of benevolent instincts, which it regards as ultimate, for the reason that no state of human life can be proved to be wholly devoid of them. Of course, even altruism is compelled to allow the egoistic impulses a certain influence upon human sentiments and actions; but the point in question is as to how far these egoistic impulses are morally justifiable. Thus it happens that the divisions of opinion within the sphere of altruistic utilitarianism are of quite a different order from those which

occur in egoistic utilitarianism. All the altruists agree that *feeling* is the original spring of moral action, although judgment and insight not infrequently exert an additional influence on the development of moral consciousness and so on the moral feelings themselves. There is no distinction between feeling-ethics and the ethics of reflection: here: altruism always belongs to the ethics of feeling. On the other hand, the question as to the worth or worthlessness of the *egoistic* instincts divides the altruistic school into two classes, which we may designate as *extreme* and *moderate* altruism.

*Extreme altruistic utilitarianism*, as represented in England by Hutcheson and in Germany, after a fashion, by Schopenhauer, recognises one moral emotion only,—benevolence or sympathy with one's fellow-creatures; egoism, whenever it conflicts with sympathy, is always in the wrong. Unselfish action alone is virtuous. Of course the moralists of this school would not unconditionally condemn as immoral all care for self or even all striving for one's own happiness. These, however, are in themselves morally worthless. According to Hutcheson, they have moral value only as they aid us in exercising the virtues of benevolence. Schopenhauer goes still further, and denies that there can be such a thing as a duty to oneself. "Compulsory duties towards self are impossible, on account of the self-evident law *volenti non fit injuria*: as for self-directed duties of inclination, ethics finds her work in this field ready performed; she comes too late."<sup>1</sup> This latter argument is effective only from the standpoint of a lower hedonism. The commonplace observation that we need no moral precepts to urge us to care for our own welfare has a certain justice so long as we understand by welfare merely care for the necessities of life. But when German rationalism from Leibniz to Kant includes all the

<sup>1</sup> *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*. Works, vol iv., p. 126.

higher duties to self under the term 'self-perfection,' and when not only Fichte and Schleiermacher, but even Bentham and Mill ascribe the highest importance to the cultivation of the individual personality, in part because those characteristics which are useful to others and to society are strengthened thereby, no one can possibly suppose that this development of character is a process which takes place without effort. Rather it is one of the most difficult of moral duties, far more often neglected than the direct exercise of sympathy and benevolence.

It follows from all this that extreme altruism cannot furnish us with a tenable moral principle; instead, it makes use of a single ethical *motive*, which, to have any real value, must always presuppose other motives. The emphasis laid on the common welfare, peculiar to other forms of utilitarianism, is wholly lacking here. This altruistic conception of duty is as much limited to the individual as that of ordinary egoism; and while one might suppose the two theories to be diametrically opposed, in reality pure altruism has more affinity with egoism than with any other system. For at bottom it is only transferring selfishness from oneself to others, and its chief reason for rejecting duties toward self lies in an overestimation of the force of egoistic motives. Hence the theory is usually the product of a pessimistic conception of human nature.

The more moderate altruism maintained by Hutcheson, which tolerates duties towards self as means to the development of the virtue of benevolence, is not open to these objections. Moreover, it adheres to the principle of utilitarianism by virtue of its more universal tendency. In exercising benevolence towards all our fellow-men we are to increase the general happiness as much as possible. Thus, in accordance with the fundamental principle of utilitarianism, the general happiness is conceived as the sum of

individual happinesses. It follows that the end of moral action is to make *as many individuals happy as possible*. But why should the happiness of the agent be excluded from this sum? Especially if, like Hutcheson and all the profounder utilitarian thinkers, we understand by happiness not merely external and material goods, but spiritual happiness as well, it is difficult to understand why pursuit of the moral end ceases to be moral as soon as it aims at the happiness of that individual whose happiness is certainly most in its power, namely, the agent himself. Either the principle of utilitarianism, that the general welfare consists in the welfare of individuals, is false, or else the welfare of the agent must be represented in the sum. It is to arguments of this sort that extreme altruism is gradually forced to yield.

Thus the more *moderate altruistic utilitarianism* has become the prevailing tendency in the ethics of to-day. It regards the essence of morality as consisting neither in wholly benevolent nor in wholly selfish instincts, but in a harmonious balance of the two. This theory is foreshadowed as far back as the Aristotelian theory of virtue. When virtue is regarded as the just medium between opposite qualities, it happens in many instances that one of these qualities is altruistic, the other egoistic in character. Shaftesbury and Hume gave more definite expression to the same thought when they made morality consist in a just balancing of one's own interest against that of others. The idea is not so prominent in modern utilitarianism, which lays more stress on the welfare of the whole; but when this latter is regarded as the welfare of all individuals, or in Bentham's phrase, as the greatest good of the greatest number, it is obvious that the self is included at least as a unit.

The advantage of this tendency consists in the fact that it seems to agree tolerably well with the practical ethics of common sense, which, morally as well as intellectually,

demands a certain average mediocrity of character and action. Now the instinct of common sense may generally be trusted in questions of conduct under the ordinary conditions of life. But so-called common sense is always a bad and unreliable judge when confronted with extraordinary cases; and in moral life as in intellectual life such cases are the most important, because they have far more influence upon moral development than that average equilibrium of egoistic impulses provided with a modicum of altruism, which suffices to maintain society in a tolerable state of morals. Further, so-called common sense is always a bad judge in theoretical cases. Where would astronomy be if the Copernican system had had to wait for the sanction of public opinion? Where epistemology, if it had had to satisfy all the prejudices of common sense? The problem of ethics does not cease to be theoretical because it relates to the principles of practical life; and the long conflict of opinion does not argue for its being less difficult than other scientific problems. No one has ever given a more impressive warning against those prejudices to which the human mind is liable through confusing its own nature with the nature of the things it considers than Bacon, one of the greatest of utilitarians.<sup>1</sup> It would be well if utilitarianism applied to its own problems the principle which he recommended; the principle that on beginning a research one should before all things divest oneself of the prejudices connected with the subject.

It is but a step further to an argument whose justice is acknowledged by many who consider it unimportant because it seems to relate less to the thing than to the name, which they are willing to abandon. When we say that the moral is the useful, we do not describe its essential nature. Utility is a relative concept, and has no definite content until we state for *what* a thing is useful. Hence when Mill, who is

<sup>1</sup> *Nov. Organon*, i. 41.



responsible for the term, designated Bentham's theory as utilitarianism, he was right at least thus far, that in Bentham's system *property* occupies the central position among all goods. Property is the useful good *par excellence*, because it has no intrinsic value, but becomes valuable in proportion as it is *used* to obtain intrinsic goods. But for Mill's own system the term 'utilitarianism' was unsuitable, for he did not ascribe so much importance to property, but regarded those spiritual and sensuous satisfactions which increase our well-being as the end of morality, and interpreted the principle of the 'maximum of happiness' in accordance with this view. Here he is wholly in harmony with modern utilitarianism, which holds that wealth is neither the only nor the infallible means to the attainment of intrinsic goods. Thus the term 'utilitarianism' is hardly an appropriate substitute for the older term *eudæmonism*. Utilitarianism differs from other forms of the latter only in the principle of the 'maximum of happiness'; it is a *social*, not an egoistic *eudæmonism*. Modern utilitarianism recognises this when it declares the moral end to be, not public utility, but *public welfare*, defining the latter, according to Bentham's principle, as the welfare of the greatest number.

Here, too, we find the indefiniteness which is always involved in the notion of *eudæmonism*. If everything that augments human well-being is moral, then health, sensuous enjoyment, the satisfaction of ambition and vanity must be included among the goods for which it is moral to strive in behalf of self and others. And most utilitarians are ready to acknowledge them as such, though they ascribe a higher value to intellectual satisfactions. Now let us put the question aside as to whether and how far a scale of degrees is possible among these different goods, and whether the decision of the majority would really be, as Mill assumes, in favour of the higher intellectual enjoyments. Let us suppose rather that

not the majority, but the best and wisest men are to consider the question. It is much to be feared that they would get into difficulties in making moral judgments according to the new standard. They would have to regard the inventions of printing, the compass, the steam-engine, and antiseptic dressings as moral actions; while they might disagree when it came to gunpowder and dynamite, or perhaps decide that these inventions were partly moral and partly very immoral. They would have to call a good many actions moral which they formerly considered merely useful; and a good many things immoral, or at least indifferent, which they formerly regarded as highly moral. The soldier in the battle-field who stands by his post when it has been abandoned by others, is of no use to others or to the cause he serves; and since his death is inevitable the honour he hopes for can never be his. Such an action diminishes happiness and creates none: how can the utilitarian call it moral and glorious? The father of a family, or a man whose public importance is such that he could not easily be replaced, saves a drowning child at the greatest risk of his own life. From the standpoint of utility his action is immoral, for the probability that it will detract from the common welfare is far greater than the chance that it will increase the sum of happiness.

Still, we must grant that these arguments are not conclusive. The utilitarian may answer: The fact that our judgments concerning right and wrong have been defective hitherto is no reason why we should not correct them by our better knowledge. It used to be thought that the moral often coincided with the useful, but not always; that the useful was sometimes moral, though in many cases not. But if the world would be better for it, why not adopt the principle that the useful is always moral and the moral useful? Possibly, however, the utilitarian might not allow

the fact of a discrepancy between his principle and ordinary moral judgment. He might say that the question is not whether a given action is more conducive than another to the general welfare, but whether the average character of a man's actions is such that the happiness of mankind is thereby increased. From this point of view there can be no doubt that it is in general better for a soldier to remain at his post, and for a child who has fallen into the water to be rescued. But this brings us to a further point, which every ethical theory must take as a test of its practicability: the question, namely, as to the relation it assumes between the *motive* and the *end* of moral action, and the agreement of its assumptions with the actual motives and consequences of human acts.

The utilitarian theory gives a definite answer to this question only so far as the end is concerned. The moral end consists in the greatest good of the greatest number. But as to the motives which impel men to strive for this end, we get no satisfactory information. We are able, however, to distinguish *two* tendencies here. The *one*, represented especially by Bentham, but in part by Mill also, inclines towards the reflection-ethics. True, it acknowledges the importance of feeling, altruistic and egoistic; but its general conception of a motive is that of an intellectual anticipation of the end to be attained; and for the higher stages of morality it requires a careful consideration of the consequences of actions, in accordance with the principle of utility. Thus it happens that the normal relation of motive to end is completely reversed. Normally, the *feelings* motive our actions, while only by *reflection* can we know anything about the end, since all intellectual ends are parts of a rational process of development. But here we have it postulated that the motive of every action should be the greatest good of all, which would seem to be an intellectual

impossibility without the aid of a pretty complex process of reflection; while the end consists in the well-being of as many individuals as possible—that is, a sum of pleasurable feelings. Now it is very doubtful whether reflection, apart from feeling, can ever determine action. It may, indeed, be assumed that the affective motive here consists in subjective anticipation of the pleasures which our act will produce in others. No one will deny that anticipated pleasure can become a motive to action, and that even when the pleasure is not ours but another's. But it is impossible to understand the production of a collective feeling, such as seems to be demanded here. The 'maximum of happiness' can be only a product of reflection; to be an effective motive it must take the form of a subjective feeling. The sole way out of the difficulty is to adopt the ethics of feeling, while postulating a control of the benevolent and egoistic instincts by the reason, so that the final decision shall always tend to secure a maximum extent of happiness. Now, evidently, a rational motive of this kind can urge one to action only when it is itself accompanied by feelings of sufficient strength. But how can the egoistic impulse ever be conquered by this far more remote desire to secure an equal relative distribution of happiness among all mankind? No one will deny that there are impersonal motives which enable men to sacrifice themselves for their neighbours or for humanity. But that the computation of an extensive maximum of happiness ever has possessed or ever will possess such a magical power is highly improbable. There is no alternative save to revive, as Bentham actually did, the doctrine of Helvetius, that all moral motives are based on delusion, either of self or of others, and exert a direct influence on action only after their utilitarian character has become established. Now, when we have once proved the absolute validity of moral judgments, it may be allowable to derive a real virtue

from an apparent one after this fashion, for we can appeal to the influence of habit, which Aristotle justly emphasises. But to take such a process as the type of moral development is self-contradictory. Error and illusion which publish themselves as reality may arise on the basis of reality, but reality itself can never be wholly the product of illusion.

Evolutionary utilitarianism acknowledges the force of these objections. It regards the end, the advantage of the human species, as wholly independent of the possible motives which may determine the will. These are more or less a matter of indifference. Certain kinds of activity have in the course of evolution proved useful to the species; individuals with a tendency to such actions must be victorious in the struggle for existence, whatever motives animate them. Now it is certain that the struggle for existence is found in human society. But if the analogy with animal selection were complete there would be little prospect that benevolence and unselfishness would come out ahead. Of two cocks in the same farmyard, it is the more ambitious, the more selfish, and the stronger that is left. If the most powerful and permanent instincts are to survive, then egoism will have the best prospect of being strengthened by natural selection. But the utilitarian evolutionist may answer: This is all very well in special cases, but humanity as a whole can continue to exist only if the altruistic tendencies are victorious. If all cocks were to fight like those in the same farmyard there would soon be none left to propagate the species. My rejoinder would be that if the theory of evolution is to explain how altruistic instincts persist in the whole, it must prove the fact in particular instances. We can understand why the strongest members of a species survive, for we see that in special cases the strong conquer the weak; but we cannot understand how the unselfish instincts can ever overcome the selfish ones, for the latter evidently

have the advantage in every special instance. Nothing but the forced introduction of some of the elements of the old contract theory will solve the difficulty. We must suppose that from the outset men have seen the danger of immoderate egoism, and have exerted themselves to restrain it. In this way those whose natures were wild, defiant and lawless have been gradually reduced in numbers, and will be still more reduced in the future. The contrast between such an application of the doctrine of evolution with the fundamental principles of Darwinism is most striking. The latter deduced the general history of development from the facts of individual observation; the theory of evolution transferred to the moral realm constructs the particular facts to accord with the supposed general course of development. And here, too, the determining motives which render possible the preservation of altruistic traits are motives that arise from reflection, though at an early stage of human development.

Nor does the problem seem to me more successfully solved when, with Herbert Spencer, one shifts the emphasis from the psychical to the physical aspect of development. It is indeed conceivable that during the course of evolution certain structures should have been built up in the nervous system, and that thus tendencies to certain reflex and automatic movements of a useful character should be inherited. Many observed facts argue for such an assumption. But how nervous tendencies become moral intuitions is, and remains, a mystery. Even those physiologists and psychologists who cherish the fantastic hypothesis that the brain-cells bear ideas permanently stamped upon them, have not yet ventured to assume that cells and ideas are handed down from parents to children. The empirical evidence for this psychological theory of heredity is still more dubious. If we cannot even allow that such elementary facts of consciousness as simple sensations or the space-intuition

are innate, how can we speak of moral intuitions,—intuitions which presuppose a number of complex empirical ideas concerning the agent, his fellow-men, and his other relations to the external world? And if we grant that these ideas cannot possibly be given ready-formed, how are we to reconcile the appearance on the scene of innate moral instincts with the empirical origin of these ideas? How are the inherited nervous tendencies to bring it about that at the sight of a suffering or imperilled fellow-being the impulses of sympathy, readiness to help, and self-sacrifice shall be awakened? Actual neurology has about as much connection with these assumptions as actual astronomy and geography with Jules Verne's voyages of discovery. Compared with this latest form of the doctrine of *ideae innatae*, the older, more naïve view, which regarded the principles of morals, metaphysics and logic as christening-gifts of divine bestowal, possessed at least the merit of simplicity.

But let us leave the discussion of the causes and motives of moral action. Utilitarianism has always claimed as its chief merit its applicability to practical life, and hence has concerned itself rather with the moral end than with the psychological conditions of moral phenomena. Now the moral end was defined by the older utilitarians as the welfare of all, while modern utilitarianism since Bentham has more modestly stated it as the greatest possible happiness of the majority. *Ultra posse nemo obligatur*,—humanity must content itself with creating as much happiness as the conditions of existence allow. Modern utilitarianism is inclined to interpret the conception of happiness in the broadest possible way as regards quality, and to allow the higher intellectual, æsthetic, and ethical pleasures their full value. In fact, certain pleasures are specially labelled as moral; for instance, the pleasures of love and friendship, joy in the prosperity and freedom of

one's country, and in the performance of humane acts. When we remember that the intellectual and particularly the æsthetic pleasures may for the most part be included in this ethical class, we shall have to define the maximum of happiness thus: that is moral which furthers the general distribution of morality.

But possibly the utilitarian would maintain that this logical circle was inherent less in the nature of his argument than in the inaccurate form of its expression. "All those pleasures," he might say, "which we regard as pre-eminently moral possess in a high degree the property of increasing our well-being. Granted that in special cases the sacrifice of one friend for another, or of a hero for his country, may have the opposite result; our sentiments are not determined by special cases, but by the general worth of the pleasure, though we become aware of this only in particular examples." This argument would very likely be unanswerable did not utilitarianism itself resolve the worth of all sources of happiness into the *particular individual* pleasures which they occasion in ourselves or in others. The only use of having a fatherland, for example, lies in the fact that it assures to each of its citizens protection, security, and the means of obtaining the other pleasures of life. The moral value of its history, of the memory of our forefathers' struggles and conquests, is purely imaginary; such things are not in themselves pleasures, though they may be worthy of high regard as having rendered possible our present state of prosperity. Thus every one of the goods which might have been regarded as general in character resolves itself into a sum of separate and particular goods, each consisting in some individual pleasure, either sensuous or intellectual. And this brings us to a final point, and one which is, in my opinion, decisive.

We have remarked before that a sum of separate and



individual happinesses, presenting itself to consciousness only as an abstract idea, is not a thing to warm the human heart, or to motive human actions. But since many moral philosophers regard an action as more meritorious, the less inclination we have towards it, this objection is perhaps not final. We can, however, demand with equal justice: "Is this sum of scattered and individual pleasures an *end* whose objective value is great enough to atone for the sacrifices which the moral law demands of us?" For the utilitarian, humanity is made up of individual men, society of its individual members. Since the whole exists only for the sake of the individual, the ends which the latter pursue in fulfilling their obligations to the whole must be in the last analysis individual ends. In fact, the individual is all that is real in the system, and one individual is just like another as regards his capacity for pleasure and pain. What, then, is the special virtue of this repetition of the same pleasurable feeling in as many distinct individuals as possible? A mathematical theorem gains nothing by being demonstrated over and over again. Two beings that agree in all their attributes become as Leibniz has shown, by virtue of the '*Principium indiscernibilium*,' one and the same being. Can we claim, in opposition to this principle, that a feeling of pleasure individualised a thousand times is worth a thousand times more than it was in the beginning? It may be answered: "Yes, for the pleasure of number Two reacts upon that of number One, and thus we have a thousand new sources of pleasure." But how can this be, if there are no pleasures except those that spring from individual welfare? If individual happiness is the measure of moral values, then for each individual this measure consists in his own greatest well-being. It is incomprehensible that he should refuse to augment his own happiness at the cost of his neighbour's; nor can we expect such a course from him, unless he is

actuated by the egoistic consideration that excessive selfishness reacts to the detriment of its possessor. This is really the standpoint of *egoistic utilitarianism*, for which the principle of the maximum of happiness means nothing. For the most prudent egoist, if he were rich, would hesitate to propose an equal division of property, save to insure himself an income of which no one would attempt to deprive him. As a matter of fact, social utilitarianism is self-contradictory, because its fundamental assumptions conflict with each other. It defines the moral end as the welfare of the *whole* of human society, and then proceeds to resolve this whole into disconnected atoms. The necessary correlative of an atomistic view of society is an egoistic ethics. The latter conflicts with utilitarian doctrine, but the utilitarian cannot avoid it. He thus occupies an untenable position between irreconcilable opposites. His correct ethical instinct repudiates the egoism to which his individualistic theory of society leads. The necessary consequence is that the moral motive becomes an inexplicable impulse, and the moral end an empty phantom, masquerading as an ideal.

The Positivism of Auguste Comte, which avoids many of the defects of Bentham's utilitarianism, especially in discussing the motive to altruism, likewise comes to grief when it attempts to define the end in such a way as to satisfy all the requirements of moral experience. Comte, too, tries to free himself from the restrictions of individualism by means of his conception of society; but the attempt is vain, for like Ludwig Feuerbach he has no way of measuring the ethical value of all those forms of society which lie between the narrow circle of the family and the wide sphere of humanity. Society, which he identifies now with the State and now with humanity, is for him as for the revolutionary moralists of the previous century, a sum of

individuals, governed by an authority which reconciles conflicting interests, and thus furthers the common welfare. While in Comte's first period his apotheosis of industrial culture led him into an exaggeration of the utilitarian tendency to include in the moral end sources of happiness which are external and sometimes highly questionable in their character; in his last period he presents the spectacle of one engaged in a fruitless effort to compensate for his unsatisfactory theory of industrial culture by an obscure humanitarian cult, half rational and half mystical.

#### 4. EVOLUTIONARY ETHICAL SYSTEMS.

##### (a) *Individual Evolutionism.*

The idea of a process of individual development is involved to some extent in almost every ethical theory. We detect it in the descriptions which the Stoics and Epicureans give of the character of the wise man, no less than in Aristotle's discussion of the value of the contemplative life, or Spinoza's antithesis between spiritual freedom and bondage, which in its turn recalls the analogous distinction between the state of grace and that of sin in the Christian ethics. It is *Leibniz*, however, who is the chief modern representative of this ethical theory, and the whole of German ethics in the last century followed his lead. The watchword of the theory, 'Self-perfection,' found an echo even in the Kantian ethics, with all its seriousness and lack of sympathy with the self-satisfied mood of the Enlightenment. Kant makes individual perfection and the happiness of others the two chief ends of moral endeavour. Fichte and Schleiermacher, as their formulation of the moral law indicates, ascribe even more importance to individual perfection.

But self-perfection in and of itself does not constitute

a moral principle. It merely furnishes the formal expression for an ethical contents elsewhere obtained. Perfection is necessarily the perfection of *something*, which must be present in some degree even at the beginning of the process of development. And this something can only be happiness, either individual or universal, according as the individual finds his moral perfection to consist in the furthering of his own or the general happiness. Perfectionism is thus necessarily associated with either egoism or utilitarianism, just as these theories usually include the idea of perfection. Thus, in the Stoics and Epicureans, in Christian ethics under a nobler aspect, and in Spinoza, we have an egoistic perfectionism; in Leibniz and his followers, perfectionism is associated with utilitarianism; while Kant combines both tendencies in demanding the happiness of others, and the perfection of the individual. In all these cases we have to meet the question as to what is meant by perfection. Since, as is usually assumed, among the various kinds of goods, sensuous, intellectual, æsthetic and ethical, the first named are universally valuable only when they serve *moral* ends, perfection must relate chiefly to moral endeavour. But if we adhere to the generally accepted principle that the end of all moral action is the welfare of our fellow-men, then the striving for perfection ultimately reduces itself to the principle of the maximum of happiness. Consequently, Perfectionism in its various forms coincides with eudæmonism, and hence is open to the same objections. Its superiority lies in the fact that it lays more stress on the duty of moral self-development.

(b) *Universal Evolutionism.*

This theory resembles the foregoing in regarding morality as actualised in a process of development. But in this infinite process the individual consciousness is only an insignificant factor. The real subject of moral life is the

universal Thought, which unfolds itself in the development of mankind, and whose manifestations are art, religion, the State, the legal order, and above all, the process of history. Thus, as in the Hegelian philosophy, extreme universalism becomes an *historical system*, which takes account of the realm of subjective morality only in so far as the individual either submits himself to the universal will, thus representing and fulfilling it, or holds aloof from it, in which case his action is worthless, and completely lost in the process of universal development. Since, however, history is a thing 'given,' of which we can only say that it is, not that it ought to be thus and so, moral judgments are deprived of the significance which is commonly ascribed to them. True, we can estimate the lower stages by the higher, but we must recognise the fact that both lower and higher are justifiable and even necessary. Hegel's law, 'All that is real is rational,' may be transformed into the statement that 'all that is real is moral.' Universal evolutionism thus avoids the objection to which individual evolutionism is liable, namely, that of being reducible to eudæmonism. But at the same time it effaces the limits which separate morality from other realms, and to which morality owes its normative influence on the will. However, this standpoint is far superior to the theories which emphasise only the subjective and individual forms of morality, in that it recognises a real moral force in the *social will*. If the extreme historical form of the theory pushes this principle so far as to lose sight of individual morality almost altogether, and to resign the normative function for the most part to positive law, the reason is to be found chiefly in the fact that it regards the individual will as a mere instrument of the social will, whereas history itself teaches us that it is really the individual wills which determine the tendency of the social will. Ethical universalism may claim the undeniable merit of

having shown that in order to do justice to the profundity and importance of the problems of ethics, the social will must be conceived as something more than the sum of individual impulses. Nor have the more moderate adherents of this view, especially Schleiermacher and Krause, failed to lay great stress on the value of the individual moral personality. On the other hand, these thinkers are in their turn inferior to the extreme supporters of the theory, because while they postulate a relation between the individual and the social will in which the latter maintains its independent significance, they do not show what the relation is, at least in such a manner as to satisfy our modern scientific requirements.

Any attempt at such a demonstration must adopt the genetic method of investigation. It must set out from the individual will as that which is given in immediate perception, and must then show how from the original characteristics of this will and the conditions to which it is subject, there develop the motives and laws of conduct, which, transcending the individual consciousness, point to a social will, embodied in individuals, and embracing in its broader purposes their several life problems.



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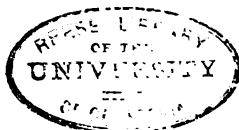
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